

Is Marriage a Failure

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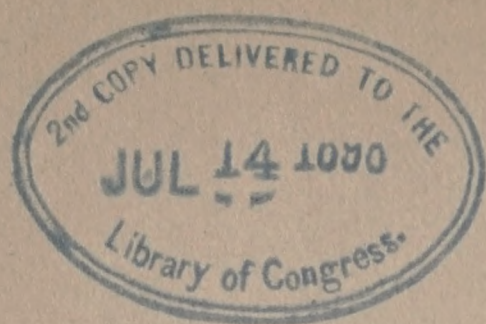
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IS MARRIAGE A FAILURE?

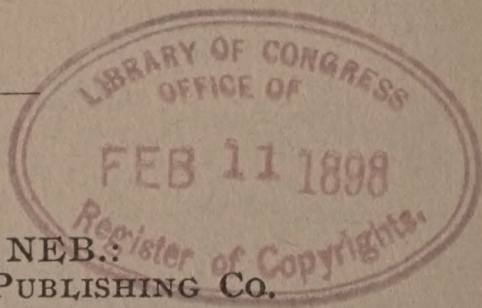
A Novel.

DEDICATED TO THOSE I LOVE: TO MY MOTHER AND FATHER,

BY HANA JEAN.

'Tis well to woo, 'tis well to wed,
For so the world hath done
Since myrtles grew and roses blew
And morning brought the sun,
But have a care ye young and fair,
Be sure ye wed with truth:
Be sure your love will wear
Beyond the days of youth,
For if ye give not heart for heart,
As well as hand for hand,
Ye'll find yon've played the unwise part,
And built upon the sand.

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CONTENTS.

	Page
CHAPTER I.—Prologue,	7
CHAPTER II.—The Commencement Exercises,	12
CHAPTER III.—The Engagement and Disappointment,	19
CHAPTER IV.—In the Net,	27
CHAPTER V.—The Mountain Fen,	37
CHAPTER VI.—Mr. Erleigh meets Thelma,	45
CHAPTER VII.—The Secret of Happiness,	48
CHAPTER VIII.—A Misunderstanding,	57
CHAPTER IX.—A Libertine Tempts a Virtuous Woman,	63
CHAPTER X.—A Family Skeleton Eneathed,	68
CHAPTER XI.—No Worse than Other Men,	75
CHAPTER XII.—Treading on Dangerous Ground,	81
CHAPTER XIII.—Adelbert Teaches Editha a Lesson,	86
CHAPTER XIV.—Mrs. Lavance's Death,	99

CONTENTS.

4

CHAPTER XV.—Riches Outweigh Moral Depravity,	104
CHAPTER XVI.—Conspiracy Against the Count,	111
CHAPTER XVII.—A Confidential Chat,	116
CHAPTER XVIII.—Announcing Alvan's Engagement,	123
CHAPTER XIX.—The Tragedy on the River,	128
CHAPTER XX.—Aberdeen's Death Reveals a Secret,	134
CHAPTER XXI.—Mrs. Aberdeen and Editha,	138
CHAPTER XXII.—Alvan and Thelma's First Born,	141
CHAPTER XXIII.—Adelbert Proposes to Editha,	144
CHAPTER XXIV.—Mrs. Aberdeen's Death,	150

IS MARRIAGE A FAILURE?

“ A bachelor old and cranky,
Sat alone in his room;
His toes with the gout were aching,
His face o’er-spread with gloom.”

“ No medical aid was lacking,
The servants answered his ring,
Respectfully heard his orders,
And supplied him with everything.”

“ But still there was something wanting,
Something he couldn’t command,
The kindly word of compassion,
The touch of a gentle hand.”

“ And he said as his brow grew darker,
As he rang for the hired nurse,
Well, marriage may be a failure,
But this is a blamed sight worse.”

— *Courier*.

CHAPTER I.

PROLOGUE.

A FAIR young girl, with her hands behind her, stood looking away toward the sunset, the breezes were blowing her loose, brown hair from a beautiful girlish face.

The sunset shadow reflecting in the dreamy, blue eyes, showed she was oblivious to all present time, and that she dwelt in happy dreams of the future.

She mused half aloud, “One short month; only

one short month," then raised her hands and clasped them o'er her head in adoration.

Then starting, as one just aroused from a deep sleep, she said, "I thank Thee, dear Father above, that I live and breathe on this beautiful earth. Was there ever a place half so fair and lovely?" Now, fully aroused from her dreamy mood, she entered the cottage through the low window, buoyant and happy. "Oh, mother mine, one short month and then what a success I shall make out of life! What shall I do Ma Mere?"

Mrs. Lavance laid aside her books, a faint smile illuminating her pale face. "You must first learn to be more dignified and form no silly, school-girl attachment, for we return to Brierville after Commencement. You will then take your proper position in society. By the way, an old school-mate called today—Mrs. Aberdeen and her son, you remember them?—they were at Aberdeen Lodge five years ago. She admired you greatly and was somewhat disappointed at not meeting you. I have asked them to dine with us at Commencement, so you may meet them. They are to reside permanently at Aberdeen Lodge. She admitted to me, as a very old friend, that she hoped her son would marry and settle here, and who knows but that my little girl may be Lady Aberdeen with wealth and position?"

"Oh, mother, dear, I do not love him."

"Fie, Editha, love is only a fashion of the uncultured."

"We who believe in affection that hopes and endures and is patient; we who believe in beauty and strength of a woman's devotion," replied Editha, quoting from *Evangeline* and *Gabriel*.

"I am perfectly astonished—such absurd nonsense! A suitable ending to all such Plebeian love affairs. Lay aside such foolish notions, Editha. I cannot imagine how Mme. Morran has so far forgotten her duty as guardian of the young to allow such books in the school-room where there are so many sentimental young girls. I am more than astonished at her lack of judgment. I am heartily glad these are the last of your school days."

Editha slipped down on a low stool at her mother's feet, and, taking her hand, looked into her face with a keen, penetrating glance.

"Mother, is there no such thing as love? Did you not love my father when you married him?"

Mrs. Lavance's eyes dropped before the pure earnest gaze of the young girl. She sighed, saying:

"Don't be foolish, Editha, I intend you shall have wealth and position. Sufficient love will come after marriage. One cannot exist on sentiment."

A shadow passed over the young girl's face, and, rising, kissed her mother good night and walked slowly away to her room.

Was this, then, part of her happy dreams of a gallant, brave, young lover? All a myth, a delusion, a fancy?

Taking up her book on essay she was soon buried in its pages, preparing for the morrow's lessons.

Mrs. Lavance sat musing long after Editha had gone. Was it the question, "Did you love my father when you married him?" that held her thoughts? "Yes," she admitted to herself, "I did, wildly, madly." She had refused many eligible offers of wealth and position, and incurred the displeasure of her own relatives for this very sentiment, Love; had married the brave young Captain Lavance, an army officer who had died in one of the bravest acts of his life on the battlefield leaving her and a little daughter.

Did she regret this? No, it was the brightest memory of her life, although left with only a pension which ceased at her death, and this little one to provide for. Thus it was she conceived the idea, as Editha grew to womanhood, to bring about a wealthy marriage, and felt she was making all necessary sacrifice to reside in Marival while Editha finished at Mme. Morran's noted school for young ladies, answering the double pur-

pose, so she told herself, of being with her daughter and keeping her out of undesirable company, but the real object was to lessen expenses, so that upon her return home, Editha might at once enter society and—well, the rest she would see to—that she would be settled satisfactorily in the shortest possible time. If her conscience smote her sometimes for this departure from all that was best and truest in her nature, she crushed it back with the satisfying thought, “It is her best interest I crave. She will thank me for all when I am gone, and I sometimes think my days are numbered—this sinking at heart! It is her very best interest. The idea she has conceived of entering the University and fitting herself for a profession, might be the best, but I feel it is not so secure as a wealthy marriage.” Yet, argue as she would, she could not quite satisfy herself. How the best within us strives to hold its own against all odds, and only when crushed and trampled with ruthless feet will it cease to cry out against the wrong.

CHAPTER II.

THE COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES.

A BRIGHT sunny morning ushered June in.

On the tenth will be Commencement, when Mme. Morran will turn unto life's stage bevys of young ladies, already polished for society, as this is one of the most exclusive of exclusive schools.

The young girls are walking over the campus in groups. We see four sitting together, they are talking of Commencement, Evadne Erleigh, Editha Lavance, Alva Darnell and Madge Greville.

"What shall we do, girls, when we leave school," said Editha.

"Oh, I'll smile sweetly on some nice young man with a title, marry and go abroad. I intend to have wealth and position," said Evadne.

"Give me love in a cottage," said Madge.

"Oh, yes; with Charley Dean," and a chorus of merry voices rang out in a gleeful peal.

"Tell us what love is, Madge, dear?"

A blushing face was raised with a pure light beaming over it as she quoted these lines:

"The magnet draws the solid steel
By some inherent power,
The soul is drawn unto the soul
That bears it's attributes,
Nor sense, nor reason can control.
All precept it refutes.

Attraction, 'tis the mystic force
The Infinite has given,
It guides the planet in its course
And draws the soul to heaven."

Editha looked on with a hushed awe; something within told her *this was true love*.

Another peal of laughter.

"I have no such sublime ideas as our poetic Madge," said Evadne. "I want a life of ease and power, and mamma says whoever can give me this I must accept, and you may rest assured I shan't exert myself. I'll let mamma arrange that for me as she does all else. Ain't you surprised that I ever passed the examination; well I never should if I had had to work for it; mamma paid the governess well to help me out in my exercise at home, so you see money is the lever, as mamma says. It has lifted me through school. I have a heap of copying to do yet on my essay; I always play headache when I am cornered."

They all laughed again at this unsophistical Evadne.

When the bell rang, all was again hurry and bustle. Then followed a week of nervous excitement as is usual in young ladies' schools, during Commencement, while preparing essays, planning dresses, consulting about stage drill, who should appear last, who first, etc.

This rule was absolute, girl graduates must wear white only. At last all was settled and Mrs.

Erleigh was assured that Evadne's sash was something that would surpass all others.

"The idea of pure white was due to Mme. Morran's absurd taste—and Evadne would look so lovely in scarlet or rose color," Evadne's mother had declared. Then, after a moment's hesitation:

"There is no accounting for taste—one must conform, I suppose."

The eventful night came, warm and balmy. Carriage after carriage rolled up and deposited many expectant mothers, and bright young girls. There was quite a crush, as mothers had each brought friends to show what wonderful prodigies were forthcoming that night.

As to sweet girl graduates, what a stir and flutter. Who has not felt as they stepped on the stage amidst the bright lights, fragrant flowers, and upturned faces, a wish, a hope, to surpass, to please. A tap of the bell, then the expectant hush as at last they come. First was Alva Darnell, smiling, a graceful bow and essay, "The Egyptian Pyramids," followed quickly by Evadne, who read a most carefully prepared paper entitled "How to please." As she kissed her hand in recognition of the slight applause, she was buried in hot house flowers sent up to the stage by two young girls who were selected to take them, and paid for by Mrs. Erleigh's most generous hand—

who thought she must make the most of this opportunity for public display.

Then followed several others; among them Madge, blushing and sweet. She made a lovely contrast and received many a token, from hearts that loved her, of sweet peas, pansies and lillies of the valley.

Mrs. Erleigh whispered to her friend by her side: "No comparison—if it had not been for decorating the stage, I most assuredly would have brought her some more suitable flowers."

Her idea of suitableness seemed to be in quantity, not quality.

Then came our bright Editha with an essay, "Is Honest Ambition an Idle Dream."

A hush fell over all as each word came clear and distinct. At least one person there felt, perhaps, for the first time in his life, a desire to be all that he might have been had not his former resolutions been short-lived. Finally the impulse to make this pure girl his wife arose within him. As she ceased reading, a murmur of applause greeted her effort, which she acknowledged gracefully.

A moment later there was passed to the stage a basker of the most exquisite flowers that had been sent up during the evening.

Even Mrs. Erleigh turned away, and a flush o'erspread her face. It surpassed every other in

magnificence. The air was fragrant with the rare exotics. As Editha stepped behind the curtain a bevy of girls caught the basket. "Was there ever anything so lovely?"

"Who sent it? What card?"

And looking over read:

"Compliments of Adair Aberdeen."

What girl would not have felt flattered by such a gift?

Then they were hurried away to their friends for the reception that followed. As she turned to receive her mother's congratulations, close by stood Mrs. Aberdeen and son, Adair.

"This is my daughter."

He bowed low before the pure, womanly girl, who extended her hand in thanks for the lovely flowers.

"I think them exquisite, and thank you."

"Not half so exquisite as the flower who received them," he said.

If he ever wished that his life had been different he most sincerely did then, as they walked away together. Mrs. Aberdeen felt that if ever a prayer ought to be answered, it was that her son might take this girl to his heart and be a better, a truer man. What mother does not hope to the last? Did she think of the great gulf between

them? I think not. The man of lax morals and the pure girl.

Perhaps she had a vain hope that this girl might work a reformation. Oh, foolish mother! "Can the leopard change his spots?"

After dinner when Adair Aberdeen craved the privilege of coming again, she was ready to answer, "Yes." Such attention, she knew, was with her mother's approval. Was there anything else that could add to Editha's happiness?

All unused to such scenes, such flattery, no knowledge of the world, she was intoxicated with pleasure.

That night several very happy people put their heads on their pillows. Mrs. Erleigh, for had not Mme. Morran told her that Evadne had surpassed herself; Mrs. Aberdeen, as she felt that her one wish might be gratified and her son settled for life; Mrs. Lavance, as she was sure Editha would marry wealth and position. Editha herself felt proud and flattered by so much attention, yet when she at last slept, her dreams were unrestful, filled with music, flowers and Adair Aberdeen. Sometimes they would be walking together, again he would leave her in some lonely spot. In calling him she awoke crying; then again she slept to find herself lost in some old house; again on the mountains with the lightning playing around her;

always alone and trying to find her way out of some dense forest.

With a wild cry she sat up, and was thankful at finding herself at home, in her own room.

Was the dream a forewarning of the bright future she had looked forward to? Was it to be clouded for all time.

CHAPTER III.

THE ENGAGEMENT AND DISAPPOINTMENT.

IT was arranged by Lady Erleigh and Mrs. Lavance, whoes places joined, that Evadne should have a grand "coming-out" ball, and such as she wished to retain as friends should have their daughters come out at this time.

Lady Erleigh's family consisted of her husband, two children, Evadne (whom we already know), and Alvan, an only son. In her girlhood days Mrs. Erleigh was a reigning society belle, fond of pomp and display. Mr. Erleigh, a man of more than ordinary intelligence, wooed and won her. Finding, after a short courtship and hasty marriage, that there was not and never could be any soul union, he brought his manhood to the front, and buried himself more deeply in the legal business of Erleigh & Thornwold. Always kind and benevolent, he allowed Mrs. Erleigh to carry out most of her whims unmolested, and felt that he might yet find in the loving care of his first-born—his son—what he had failed to find in his wife. And well was he repaid, as they were knit together in soul, as David and Jonathan of old. He insisted on, and did supenintend Alvan's education from childhood. As the son grew into manhood he was possessed of noble characteristics, fine physique and manly bearing, and erased, in a great measure,

the disappointments of a life-time. From boyhood Mr. Erleigh had been his confidant and companion.

His father was a man who loved home, but as there was very little home-life in the great fashionable house, constant work filled up the void.

After Alvan's return from college, he entered at once into his father's firm as confidential partner. And Mrs. Erleigh confided to her dear friend, Lady Aisley, with a great sigh, that he was decidedly odd—so much like his father.

“He insisted on calling with us one day when Lady Darnell's daughter was here, and, do you believe me? asked to see her baby! Imagine Evadne's and my mortification! She had the nurse bring baby, and he really held it. I should not have been more surprised if he had insisted on carrying it home.”

“Just in the midst of this interesting scene Lady Aberdeen and her son, Adair, were announced. Poor Evadne, who is equal to any emergency, ran right out to the conservatory, and we followed.

“I told his father of his actions at dinner. He only laughed and slapped him on the shoulder, saying:

“‘I hope, my son, you may be the father of many noble sons and daughters of your own.’

“Oh, Lady Aisley, we all have our trials!” and her handkerchief went up to her eyes.

“Now, if he only had the style of Sir Aberdeen or other young men, take a cigar or wine, what comfort! Oh! I must bear it. If I only had married Lord Arnough!

“You recollect at Commencement Alvan insisted on presenting Evadne with a simple bunch of forget-me-nots tied with a white ribbon, and his father sent a white lilly. It keeps Evadne and I busy covering up their horrid mistakes. It was such a missalliance on my part when I married Mr. Erleigh. Oh, dear!” and the lace-broidered handkerchief covered the eyes, and prevented further conversation.

When Lady Erleigh announced at breakfast next morning her intention of having a “grand coming-out ball” for Evadne there was not a dissenting voice.

Alvan was pleased with a secret hope of meeting the young graduate who had so strangely touched his heart at Mme. Morran’s.

The ball was to be the affair of the season. All was hurry and bustle. Invitations sent, dresses ordered, friends consulted.

At last the eventful night came. Crowd after crowd filled the spacious parlors. Mrs. Erleigh was here, there and everywhere.

The grand promenade passed up the long parlors, headed by Evadne on Sir Aberdeen’s arm. She was arrayed gorgeously in old rose and chif-

fon; and she and Editha, in her pale pink dashed over with white roses, looked not unlike two bright stars—rather sun and moon of opposite splendor.

Aberdeen claimed the first dance with Evadne. Alvan followed with Editha, whom, it was plain to be seen, was the belle of the ball-room. Little groupings hovered around her. Foremost in one of these was Alvan.

She was drawn to him by a subtle attachment, a restful feeling of ease and quiet. This arrangement pleased Mrs. Erleigh more than they knew. She felt satisfied that Editha—well, she and Alvan would do. He, perhaps, would not do any better with his queer notions and odd ways, so she was graciousness itself.

Evadne might yet be Mrs. Aberdeen. She felt sore about the lovely basket—Aberdeen's gift to Editha at Commencement.

Meeting Mrs. Lavance, she said laughing lightly:

"My dear Mrs. Lavance, perhaps Alvan—well, well, I can't say—I'll not object, though he is so odd. And has it never occurred to you, dear Mrs. Lavance, that Editha is inclined to be a little—oh, just a little odd?"

"Have you noticed Sir Aberdeen has paid quite marked attention to Evadne?"

"Well, well! If he only had a title! But one can't have everything. Their estate and name

are the oldest in the country; but I do not dare even hint such a thing—her father and Alvan would go wild.”

Just then other guests were ushered in, with them Mrs. Abbyford and son, Adelbert—staid, dignified—a man of perhaps eight and thirty, too young looking to have the hair touched here and there with threads of silver. He possessed a warm, cordial manner, both winning and kindly. What a royal greeting was extended them by Alvan and his father as they passed through the ball-room. Adelbert stopped, saying:

“Who is that graceful girl standing by Sir Aberdeen?”

He passed out with rather a quiet bow to all. After that dance Alvan said:

“Allow me to present Mrs. Abbyford.”

Editha looked into a beautiful, serene face, little dreaming how her life would be entwined with this one.

The ball closed, to be followed by others; but ere this one closed, a young, inexperienced girl had given her life and future prospects into the keeping of another.

Was he worthy of this sacred trust?

Time will tell.

On reaching home Editha went at once to her mother's room and told her all. Sir Aberdeen

had asked her to be his wife. To say Mrs. Lavance was pleased does not express it. She was jubilant as she said:

“Bless you, my child; I hope you will be very happy.”

A thrill—not of pleasure, but pain—passed through the mother’s heart.

“Oh, mother, I do not care to marry; I can talk with him, but when he leaves me I feel rested and happier. Mother, is there no such thing as love? I do not love Sir Aberdeen. May I tell him so tomorrow when he calls to see you?”

“Not for world’s. You silly child! to throw away such an opportunity. ’Tis a chance of a life-time. Most girls would be flattered, but you are odd, Editha, very odd. I will not *insist*, yet I feel you will make a serious mistake if you refuse. Mrs. Erleigh admitted tonight she hoped that Evadne would be Mrs. Aberdeen. You will think better of it tomorrow; so good-night, and happy dreams, Mrs. Aberdeen, that is to be.”

Mrs. Lavance was very gracious when Mr. Aberdeen begged for an early day—six months at least. When he left the house it was to be three months from that day, Editha’s nineteenth birthday. Her first sensations were those of something wrong. She would have liked more time to prepare. There seemed to be something lacking. Her maidenly instincts were pained in consenting

to such a hurried marriage. Her dreams had been of a gallant lover, a long courtship delightfully romantic, with interchange of loving little notes and epistles; some long, moonlight strolls, hesitation and pleading, some girlish romance, before finally consenting. And now it was all settled so entirely different from what she had wished and thought. She could not prevent it now, but it was not as she had thought of it.

Surely this was not the spirit of a happy bride, the wedding following so quickly after the announcement. It was to be a quiet affair, as Mrs. Lavance's health was somewhat impaired; and Editha had always thought of a brilliant little church wedding with two or three school-girl friends as brides-maids; and now it was all so entirely different, she felt a sense of pain when she thought of it.

To say that Mrs. Erleigh was scandalized would feebly express it.

"No accounting for taste," she said, "If she and Alvan had married."

She looked across the table at Alvan, little dreaming what a blow this same announcement had been to his fondest hopes.

His father knew, as Alvan, in his despair and sorrow, had written Editha, asking for her love, and had received in reply a note that said she was already engaged to Sir Aberdeen.

"If it had been anyone worthy of her, father, I could have borne it better. Shall we rest?"

His father understood, and astonished Mrs. Erleigh and Evadne by asking at dinner if they would like to go abroad for the fall and winter, the very thing they had been planning, as a foreign title was the only thing left.

"So opportune for Evadne; she need not then attend Editha's wedding—it would be awkward—and we can't afford to offend Lady Aberdeen, Adair's mother. You must really secure a foreign title."

For once the family were fully agreed, and sailed away together—one to conquer the boy's first heart ache, the other bent on causing some one's heart to ache, if possible.

CHAPTER IV.

IN THE NET.

WHEN they had reached the continent, Mrs. Erleigh insisted on taking a house as she had a number of friends and was determined not to leave the Old World until her daughter was a titled bride. They had not long to wait until an Earl put in an appearance. By dint of inquiry he soon learned that they were quite well-to-do Americans with an only daughter, but was somewhat chagrined to find that there was a son also. Nevertheless he thought this a very sure way out of his difficulties and determined to try, as any one with a title had an entry to Mrs. Erleigh's good graces. He was Evadne's shadow. Mrs. Erleigh was pleased at this mark of distinction when he first made known his wish. Evadne, after consulting with her mother, referred him to her father.

Mr. Erleigh had noticed that at dinner he had drunk wine to excess. He looked up with a frown when he was announced next morning as wishing a private interview. Mr. Erleigh motioned him to a chair and noticed his flushed face and bleared eyes.

"You wished to see me," said Mr. Erleigh.

"You have, I understand, an only daughter. I called to see if I could—if you—if we could arrange a marriage settlement?"

"Do I understand that you desire to make a marriage settlement on my daughter?"

"Well, rather you—I—you would," said the Earl.

Mr. Erleigh arose to his feet.

"You are the Earl of Louren, I believe?"

"I hold that honorable title sir."

"Then, my honorable sir and Earl, I refuse to even talk with you of my daughter, as you are the worse for wine. I will overlook this offense but do not repeat it."

"But, sir, you will not refuse me a chance to well to—to—plead my cause."

"I refuse you even the privilege of calling here again, and bid you good morning."

"Just what one might expect from an American."

"Thomas," as the footman appeared, "show the Earl to his carriage, and assist him; *he is ill.*"

Mr. Erleigh was a quiet man, but when aroused he was austere. Going to his wife's room he found her alone with Evadne, and related what had passed.

"Do not let me hear any more about this Earl!"

They both knew that was at an end; Mrs. Erleigh saying, "there are worse faults for a young man than drinking wine."

A month later Mr. Erleigh was not surprised

when Count La Orvel knocked at the library door. He had felt for some time that this would be the outcome of the many visits of the Count, as Evadne and her mother left nothing undone to attract and hold him, since the unlucky episode with the Earl.

"I have no doubt," Mrs. Erleigh said to herself many times during the day, "my daughter will be the Countess."

Mr. Erleigh could but admire the manly bearing of the Count as he came straight to the point in a business like way.

"I love your daughter and come to ask her hand in marriage."

Mr. Erleigh smiled.

"I admire your pluck, Count La Orvel, thus to beard the lion in his den and ask for my little girl. As you are a man of judgment I have one objection to you personally. Your age and position are such that it seems my daughter would not be a suitable wife. She is a mere school-girl. I would wish her to know more of girl-hood, and in fact be better fitted for the responsible duties of wife and mother, before she assumes them, and marry one of our own country, that she may live near us."

"You do not object to international marriage, then?"

"By no means, my dear sir; they are produc-

tive of the greatest possible good. From inter-marriage with the German and Italian nations we have the music and art; from France, beauty and culture; from the Scotch, integrity and what we call grit; from Ireland, patriotism and intellect; from the English nation morality and the Americans in return supply the indomitable will and the nervous energy."

"They call me a Count—"

" 'A man's a man for a' that and for a' that,' " said Mr. Erleigh.

Both gentlemen laughed.

"Then," said the Count, "there can be no serious objection."

"My dear sir, this is a matter of a life-time and requires mature deliberation. I would like my children near me, and it would be impossible to leave her here, even with so good a protector."

"Thanks, Mr. Erleigh. Will you not trust me to be all and more than father and mother. I am amply able, financially, to gratify her every whim."

"That proves to me you do not understand women thoroughly, as you would find that a very difficult matter. My daughter, I am sorry to say, has not had a practical education and is, therefore, not fitted as yet for the honorable position which you so kindly offer. Would you marry her if you thought she was marrying you for title only? She

is not old enough yet to know her own heart. We are simple Americans without wealth. I would have you consider this and feel, my dear sir, I am the best judge in the matter."

"But does my love count for nothing, Sir Erleigh?"

"It is for this very reason I withhold my consent. Do you wish a loveless wife."

"Sir Erleigh, my own strong love cannot but find a response in the heart of your daughter."

Mr. Erleigh sighed as he thought of his own marriage.

"I will say this, wait two years, and then, if my daughter still has this at heart, I will give you my blessing. Sir, I would to heaven she reciprocated all you feel, and was in every way fitted to be your wife in deed and in truth. As yet her mind is unformed—her education superficial; in two years she will have had time for deliberation, and, as I have said, I will not then oppose. I respect you and love my child, and would wish you both the happiness you crave."

He then arose.

As the foreign count and the American gentleman stood looking at each other, I doubt if you could find two men who so thoroughly admired each other. In each there was the true manhood; one with the fire of love kindled and glowing, the other with the fire burned low and the *ashes* giv-

ing the wider experience. Their hands meet, but no words were exchanged.

As the Count retired, Mr. Erleigh sank back in his chair, with his elbow on the table. He leaned his head on his hand and dwelt on his own courtship. Was it not the same—in haste, a pretty face and a long life, sometimes *so* lonely; and yet, he smiled as he thought of the son—how he had, in a measure, filled the aching void.

He was aroused by light foot-steps coming along the hall; the door was opened, he saw Lady Erleigh with a lace handkerchief—this he knew meant hysteria; and, after he arose and placed a chair for her, she sank into it and applied the handkerchief to her eyes.

“A headache, my dear?”

Then came the first gun of open rebellion.

“Just as I expected! I told the Count you would not consent. Two years! Why, you are mad! Do you think the Count will wait two years? And a chance of a life-time lost! You must, you shall consent!” and a flood of angry tears finished this sentence.

“My dear, do you know what this means—this marriage of that mere child to this man of double her age? Is she in any way fitted for this most responsible position? Think of her here, we in America! I cannot consent. In two years, if she is prepared and fitted for this most important

step in her life, then, and not until then, will I give my consent."

"You would ruin the prospects of our child; when the prize is in hand, you dash it from us; and when we have exerted every nerve to bring this match about. It will break the child's heart and ruin her prospects. She shall marry him whether you consent or no!" and there was another flood of tears.

"Mrs. Erleigh, listen to reason; do you know what this means?"

"Yes, I know; if an insignificant American has a chance for a title, they are mad not to take it, and I say, using your own words, only an insignificant American would marry for a title."

"Do you think a true American, or foreigner either, for that matter, would marry for a title? Yet, if all things, being equal, they should thus marry, would this constitute true marriage?"

"No, by no means."

"Then what can we expect of this marriage if our daughter should marry for this title? No; let us wait, and if it is based on true love it will withstand the storms of two years; if not, so much the better."

"But surely you can find no fault with this Count?"

"Far from it! He is a man in every way

worthy of the best love of some sensible woman; not of a frivolous child."

"That is all the respect you have for your own," and the strong hysteria came on again.

As Mr. Erleigh was accustomed to these storms, he sighed and turned to the table.

Mrs. Erleigh, still with the handkerchief to her eyes, left the room in a most indignant state, and going to Evadne's room, where she was sure of finding her (as she and her mother both left the parlor together after the Count had told them of his disappointment, and after he had been assured by Mrs. Erleigh that it would be all right), mother and daughter decided to remain there and have their meals sent to their rooms, acting the role of the abused wife and broken-hearted child—seeing no one except the Count—until one day when they appeared at dinner with a number of friends and announced the engagement. Mrs. Erleigh was all smiles and in the seventh heaven of delight.

If Mr. Erleigh's face wore a shade of anxiety no one noticed it excepting those who knew how near this lay to his heart.

After a strong appeal to Evadne, which only ended in hysteria, he washed his hands of it all, telling the Count he did not oppose, and yet he could not consent; hoping in his heart this man might have all he craved in this marriage with his

daughter, and yet doubting even its possibility.

Not to lose ground, Lady Erleigh sanctioned the Count's request for the marriage to take place before the family sailed for America.

When Mr. Erleigh was consulted, he said:

"It matters little whether two or six months hence."

Yet the Count felt ill at ease in regard to the father, and when he called again to urge no delay, he sought out Mr. Erleigh, who was alone reading. In his impetuous lover-like haste, he stepped in, crossed the room, and in his graceful way, kneeling, bowed his head, saying:

"Will you not grant your blessing on our union, my father?"

"My son, I do most heartily pray God's richest blessing on you both," and the tears gathered in the eyes of Mr. Erleigh. "And," assuming a merrier mood, "I, as a representative of our proud nation, America, I pardon you."

As the Count stood laughing before Mr. Erleigh there was a suspicion of tears in his eyes.

Once again the two representatives of different nations stood looking at each other; then, arm in arm they left the room.

So it was arranged that the wedding, to please Mrs. Erleigh, should be celebrated with great pomp in St. James.

"It will sound so well on the cards," she said to Evadne.

The eventful night arrived. It was clear, cold and moonlight.

The old church was gay with garlands of evergreen, and banked with American beauties, interspersed with stars and stripes trailing to the very floor. The whole place was flooded with light brighter than the noon day.

As the last strains of the wedding march trembled on the air, the Rector, an old man practically deaf, stood to support the deans in surplined array.

"Who gives the bride away?"

"I do," said Mr. Erleigh.

"And the Lord have mercy on his soul," said the old man.

Even Mr. Erleigh smiled at this, as it so voiced the inner sentiment of his own soul. But the ceremony went on, and if there were those that heard, they did not understand.

Mrs. Erleigh was completely carried away when she at last could say in truth: "My daughter, the Countess."

CHAPTER V.

THE MOUNTAIN FEN.

ALVAN and two young American gentlemen who had traveled during the winter secured rooms at the Mountain Fen, at the foot of the hill, so as to enjoy to the full the mountain scenery during the lovely springtime. Once they set off for the day with well filled hampers, when their host had said, "twelve miles above there is a cottage, and there you will find guides."

As they traveled up the incline they came across an elderly gentleman and lady sitting on a plateau. They bowed and passed on. Two miles farther on they descry three persons. While they were wondering who the travelers could be, they were startled by a shrill scream, in a girlish voice, and saw a small boulder rolling down the now steeper decline. It struck one of the dwarf shrubs, changing its course somewhat, and rolled down the opposite side out of sight, not far before a bundle. Each looked in wonder. Alvan, quick to perceive, jumped forward and caught it as it rolled to his feet. His astonishment was so great he could not speak when he saw the bundle was a young lady, covered with leaves, grasses and dirt—tattered and torn. He raised her up against his knee, limp and faint. The others came to his rescue and undoing their blankets made a bed for

her, using their brandy and water flasks freely. Alvan who had taken his handkerchief and used it as a towel, bathing her face and hands, was rewarded by seeing a pair of blue eyes open, then close again.

By this time two very scared young girls came down the mountain side.

"O! Is she killed? Is she killed?" they asked in chorus:

They were assured, by one who was a young medical student, that she had swooned, and was, apparently, otherwise uninjured.

The girls then explained that the lady and gentleman, farther down were their chaperons who were waiting for them at the first plateau until their return.

As they were resting on three small boulders Miss Alwyne's had, from some unaccountable cause, loosened and rolled down. She had struggled to regain her foot hold, lost her balance and followed, the impetus being caused by the steep decline.

By this time, owing to the strenuous efforts put forth by the young men Miss Alwyne was able to sit up and take a swallow or two of brandy and water. Finding she was not seriously hurt she looked up and burst out sobbing.

Alvan was still on his knees by her side supporting her with his arm.

As the young medical student looked at Alvan's distressed face and the beautiful young thing who had tumbled down upon them, his power of resistance gave way, and he burst into a merry peal of laughter, which had the desired effect.

The tears ceased and the clear girlish voice joined his. Alvan, too, seeing the ridiculous side, joined. By and by the contagion spread to all and peal after peal of laughter rang out over the mountain side, doing more to clear away the confusion than any amount of words could have done.

By the time Miss Alwyne had recovered from fright, and could speak again without laughing, she showed her good sense by requesting that their chaperon might not be disturbed by the accident, as it had proved harmless.

The young gentlemen then introduced themselves and proposed that they should all lunch together and give Miss Alwyne a chance to recover, when they would continue and return together.

Alvan proposed to his comrades that they go around the bluffs to a cave, allowing the young ladies to prepare the lunch. They acted on his suggestion. As they proceeded he explained to them that Miss Alwyne would have a chance to straighten up.

When they returned in the course of an hour,

they found a nice lunch, and a young girl with a rosy face greeted them.

"You see I am clothed and in my right mind, if part of my wardrobe is at the foot of the mountain."

Again the mountains rang with laughter.

As the mountain breezes bore away the spirit of sorrow, in this first real mirth which had entered Alvan's heart since his sorrow for Editha; so they wafted into his heart a new joy.

Every now and then he burst out with a quiet laugh. A joyous smile was on his face; a new spirit reigned in his heart.

Rest had restored Miss Alwyne to her former self.

When the lunch was done full justice to, which required another hour, they were then ready for the proposed trip of a mile or two, farther on. There they would rest again, after which the young ladies could return to their friends.

Alvan claimed Miss Alwyne for his special charge. She took the hand he held out to her, as a child might, with perfect trust.

Soon the young ladies proposed starting on the return trip, and Alvan suggested that they should all return together, that they might see the ladies safely down. All heartily coincided in

this, and when the young people reached Mr. and Mrs. Alwyne they, amidst many peals of laughter, told of the accident and Alvan's kindness. The Alwyne's were delighted to find that the young men were stopping at the Mountain Fen and proposed all return to the mountains and spend a week at the Travelers Rest, allowing the young people the freedom of the mountains.

The last rays of the setting sun bathed the mountains and valleys in a lovely amber and gold as they descended.

Alvan called it the Peaceful Valley—enjoying such peace in his own soul. When he went up this morning his heart was full of pain—this evening, such a peace reigned within. Was it the dawn of a new life? He was so happy he could not sleep, and passed the time until midnight writing his father a long account of all that had transpired and finished with, “Father, her name is Thelma Alwyne; don't you think it lovely? And she is an angel, too.” When Mr. Erleigh finished reading this letter he hastened to reply, saying that it was the first time he ever learned that angels were named Thelma, and he hoped Alvan would not go to live with angels yet a while.

After finishing the letter to his father Alvan indulged in a long dream, what it was we shall

see. Arousing himself he found it almost two o'clock. Going to the window he looked out. The myriad stars were shining in the sky, the earth rested in a halo of peace; was it this that filled his soul with all the fullness of joy?

And when he put his head on the pillow, it was to dream pleasant dreams of angels covered with flowers, peeping out of leaves, and floating over all, but they always had Thelma's face.

When at last he awoke, it was with the bright sunlight streaming in his window.

Hurrying on his dressing gown he walked over and opened the window. Such a song of birds and odor of spring flowers was wafted in! How his heart drank it in! Looking in the glass, he hardly knew himself, there was such a changed expression in his face and eyes.

Upon going to the breakfast room he found the party had already breakfasted and were on the lawn.

When at last he reached them they all exclaimed at his appearance. His tired look was gone. In its place was the bright, boyish, laughing face of old.

Going over to Thelma, he inquired, very anxiously, the effects of the accident.

She blushed and smiled so sweetly that Alvan wondered how he could ever have thought of

anyone else. He felt as if he had known her always.

It was arranged they should set out for the Travelers Rest, after an early lunch, and spend a week there.

At the end of that time they returned, but not before Alvan had told Miss Alwyne that he loved her and had been told that he might speak to her guardian.

Alvan lost no time in going to Mr. Alwyne.

"I love Miss Thelma; will you sanction our union? I am an American citizen and my father will meet you, I know. I have no wealth to offer—only love."

My dear sir it is not wealth that brings happiness. The young lady is just from school. Our relationship is very remote, nevertheless I stand in place of father to her. She is alone in the world. I will say, if in time all is well, you have my best wishes for your happiness, at present, I wish her to travel, and make her own comparisons. You are the first gentleman she has been intimately acquainted with, and if her love will not stand the test, better know it now than later."

A twinge of jealous pain passed through Alvan's heart. He put it away as unmanly, saying, "you are right, Mr. Alwyne; we will stand

the test. I feel assured Thelma is too true to do other than right."

"Well said, sir. This is not a matter of a day, but of a lifetime, and needs careful consideration. You are both young and the test will do you good."

CHAPTER VI.

MR. ERLEIGH MEETS THELMA.

WHEN Mr. Erleigh asked his wife if she would not like to go over to the mountains for a month, she said:

“If you and that silly boy can find nothing better to amuse you, go; but I assure you Evadne and I have no desire to go to such an outlandish place. You ought to try and use your influence and have Alvan thrown in the company of some titled ladies, and perhaps he might be settled creditably to the family. I would not be at all surprised if he should marry one of those peasant maids, and have no doubt but what you would feel satisfied with his choice.”

Mr. Erleigh had brought the letter to his wife's room to read, giving them Alvan's message, to have his mother and Evadne come and see this angel; he was so sure they would love her at first sight.

With a sigh, Mr. Erleigh folded the letter, put it in his pocket and went out to write Alvan that as Evadne and her mother were very busy with the preparations for the wedding, he would be with him for a week, and give them his blessing.

In his numerous letters Alvan had told his

father of his love and hope, as he had all through his boyhood days gone to him with every joy or sorrow.

When Mr. Erleigh alighted at the station he was surrounded by a bevy of as happy young people as it would be possible to find. In the background were the elders, who came to welcome the father, feeling assured such a son must have a father worth knowing.

When he first caught sight of Alvan, with such a glad, happy face, it repaid him for his own self-sacrifice in permitting him to go away.

The greeting over, he turned to present Thelma, who blushed as Mr. Erleigh put his arms around her, saying: "God bless my little girl, too; I would have known you anywhere by Alvan's description. Where are the wings?" turning her around with a merry laugh.

This put them at ease. They felt as if they had known each other for years.

The large carry-all, with four horses, from the Mountain Fen, carried back a crowd of merry travelers who made the mountains ring with

"The Star Spangled Banner,
O, long may it wave,
O'er the land of the free
And the home of the brave,"

interspersed with variations of "None But the Brave Deserve the Fair," sung by the happy young men, who cast significant looks at Alvan, the

merriest of the crowd. Many a door was partially opened to see who the noisy crew were, the inmates, no doubt, thinking the American nation had failed in cultivating artistic singers, as the tones varied to suit the individuals, Messrs. Erleigh and Alwyne adding their deep bass, and entering into the joyousness of the young people.

Mr. Erleigh and Alvan repaired to Mr. Alwyne's room immediately after dinner; then it was settled. At the end of three years Mr. and Mrs. Alwyne and Thelma should visit the new world, and until then Mrs. Erleigh and Evadne should not be apprised of the engagement; Alvan would return with his father for Evadne's wedding; the other party would continue their trip to France and Italy.

This was a sad arrangement for the young people, although they agreed it was for the best.

At the end of another joyous fortnight the happy party was scattered far and wide, but each member would ever keep green in memory the happy springtime on the Swiss mountains.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SECRET OF HAPPINESS.

A RAP at Madge's door was followed by the entrance of Mrs. Wynan, who came in to make a friendly call.

"You are always so happy; why is it you and your husband never have an unkind thought?" she inquired.

"Hush, dear Mrs. Wynan, we are both human. Men are very human. We are growing each day as nearly into each other's lives as possible. I find that if we expect happiness we must first realize the full sense that man lives not for himself alone: *then* only are we happy. I learned this more thoroughly when Arlie was a baby; my love for this, our first born, was very great. I said to all requests of my husband, was it opera, lecture, or what not, 'I can not leave baby.' He dared not stir for fear of disturbing him. The house was a den of selfish whims, and if anything was said I dwelt on the sacrifices women make for men when they give their all, not realizing my husband was my other self and just as interested in baby as I could be, sacrificing time, home, money, and all pleasure for baby, and I also supporting and arranging every thing for the comfort of both. He soon spent his evenings at the club. About this time mother came to pay us a visit.

The first evening Charles stayed at home. When she requested the old family hymn at bed time I answered, 'I never play now, it disturbs baby.'

" 'Well, and what does baby's papa do in the evenings for his music? I believe I remember many evenings when baby's father visited Marjorie that she had practiced for hours on some new piece to entertain him. Few evenings passed that he did not come to spend them with her.'

" Both Charles and I sighed.

" 'I sometimes wish for the olden days,' he said.

" 'I too,' was my quick rejoinder, 'only I love baby so much.'

" 'Did you ever think this baby link binds you closer than any other—this pledge of love? I am afraid, Marjorie, that King Royal has made my little girl selfish.'

" A blush spread over my face.

" 'Mother, isn't it Charles? Ought he to ask me to play or go out when I devote my time to baby? It is wearisome some times when he is nervous and cross.'

" 'And yet Charles is, perhaps, weary and nervous, too, with the worries of business.'

" Then she deftly changed the topic into one of cheery pleasant conversation.

" We were all surprised. What a pleasant evening we had passed and I had not been to

see baby once. Now I quickly left the room, and as quickly returned.

“‘The maid has been reading in the nursery and said the music was scarcely audible when the door was closed. Baby awoke, laughed and crowed, and is again sleeping soundly.’

“‘As the good nights were said Charles took mother’s hand and kissed it.

“‘Thanks, mother, for a charming evening at *home*,’ laying stress on *home*.

“‘My wise mother knew that Charles and I were making a grave mistake very early in life and determined to rectify it before she returned home.

“‘The next evening was lodge night. Charles, after a pleasant little after-dinner chat, arose reluctantly to start, saying:

“‘Tomorrow night is the Grand Opera; will you accompany me, mother?’

“‘Thank you, certainly.’

“‘And perhaps Madge, too?’ hesitatingly.

“‘With a bright good night he was gone.

“‘I went over and sat on a low stool by mother for one of her good talks, as of old.

“‘Dear child, how is this? You are letting Charles slip away.’

“‘Why, what do you mean? We are happy, mother. You don’t think there is anything wrong with Charles, do you?’

“ ‘Yes, with Charles and Marjorie too. You are both eating your pie-crust without fruit,’ and a serious pair of eyes looked up full of interest.

“ ‘Why was it you did not kiss Charles good night? We will have retired when he returns as he said he would not be back until about twelve o’clock. Then you never thanked him for the invitation to the opera; declined without an excuse, without even saying, ‘at some future time.’ Would you have done this before you were married? Then you left the room without even saying ‘by your leave.’ ’

“ ‘You know, mother, how baby has taken my time.’

“ ‘Dear child, the selfish excuse of a wife.’

“ ‘Then we have been married three years and he knows I don’t mean anything—he is my husband.’

“ ‘I am aware, child, he has surely learned in three years that you don’t mean anything social or unselfish; yet, laying all jokes aside, he is your husband, kind, loving; and is entitled to all this because of the fact that he chose you, in preference to all others, as the Queen of his heart. Would you have met Mr. Dean three years ago in this way; with that plain dress; with hair coiled in that unbecoming style; without a handshake or a good night kiss when he left? If not then, why tonight?’

“ ‘Mrs. Merivale says it is silly to kiss your husband.’

“ ‘I have known such women. They are not fit associates for my little girl. They perhaps believe in the old saying: ‘Kiss some one else’s children and husband, and allow your own children and husband to get their kindly words and kisses from strangers.’ What homes we would have all over this beautiful land if this one idea, of allowing our heart’s richest offerings to be laid on the home altars, was carried into practice! If all our best smiles and kindest words and deeds were acted and spoken to the tired husbands and wives while they live and need them, and not reserved to decorate cold marble monuments away out in the cemeteries! Go out there and you will see monuments reaching almost to the blue dome, representing large fortunes, do they not read: ‘In memory of my beloved husband or wife?’ What does he or she, lying so silent there, care for the hearts offering at that time? Marjorie, I want your best love now, while I need it. Do not have a great parade when I am gone. Use the withered flowers around my room on my coffin—fit emblems. Give me the perfume of the roses while I need them. Take the money that would be required for an expensive monument and floral display, and educate some homeless boy or girl. Help the living, leave the dead alone with their God.’

“‘Mother, you make me feel as though I had committed a crime or wronged Charles.’

“‘Child, you have committed a crime against love and home; wronged Charles by letting him take for granted that you still love him and he allowing you to do the same. You say that we are old, prosy, married people. Should you plead age? You are twenty-three, Charles, twenty-eight. Why prosy? Take it for granted; I am sixty. If I should retire now and leave my little girl with a formal good-night, what would she think? Surely something wrong! That I did not care for her! And if I should offer as an excuse that we were old, prosy, mother and daughter, I had known you for twenty-three years it would not lessen your desire to have me caress you. You wrote me that you missed my kisses and even more so since baby came. Does Charles forget the kisses of baby’s mother? Would you want baby to forget your kisses? Why, they are the expressions of love.’

“‘Silent tears were coursing down my cheeks. ‘Then baby has all of Charles’ kisses, all of his wife’s time, and Charles is thrown on the mercy of strangers for sympathy, encouragement and kindly words. God grant you may realize the great importance of how often we give the best to the sometimes stranger, the most cosy corner, the best room, the easiest chair, the most

pleasant smile, while to our own, the 'cool take it for granted.' I would not have you neglect the kindly acts and words to the guest, but shower them also on your own. Love is unselfish—it is the sun of the universe, without it all is gloom and dreariness. Love comes from the source of love, the All Father.'

"My good-night meant more than was said as I threw my arms around my mother's neck, and exclaimed, 'My angle mamma, I love you.'

"Tears stood in my mother's eyes as she said good-night.

"This is more than gold and diamonds to me, child; as the old prophet in the Good Book says 'Words fitly spoken are as apples of gold in pictures of silver.' He had doubtless realized this in his own life. If you love Charles tell him so.'

"Charles was reading his paper as usual next morning as I entered the dining-room. He looked up as I put my arms around his neck and kissed him. He was surprised and pleased. Then he put down his paper and looked me over. I had crimped my hair, put on my pink dressing sack. As he saw this he said, 'I suppose this is in honor of our visitor.'

"No, this is in honor of my husband. Mother said last night she would not be down early.'

"Thanks.' And a happy light shown in his eyes.

"After breakfast I walked with him to the gate.

What a fervent kiss I received, and how the old desire came back to ask Charles to come home to lunch. Adding how long the day was while he was away.

“ ‘I am so glad to come but feel it makes extra work for you since baby came.’

“ ‘How my face burned to think baby had driven Charles out of heart and home.

“ ‘Re-entering the house after a lingering good-bye, I found mother was in the dining-room.

“ ‘Dear mother, I thank you for opening my eyes. How could I have driven my husband so far from me by my cool ways? Even telling him not to come home for lunch, not even eating breakfast with him and then spending my time evenings with baby. Poor Charles.’

“ ‘Yes, child; I could hardly realize how warped my noble-hearted girl had become, in first one selfish act, then another, until the plant of love was withered, almost killed in the soil of selfishness. It is such a sensitive, such a frail thing, it will die unless well nourished. Well cared for it grows into a tree; beautiful and fragrant, sending out sprouts, twigs and perfume all over the surrounding lands. The influence, Marjorie, going out from one loving and unselfish household is untold, reaching into the beautiful beyond.’”

When Marjori had ceased speaking she looked

up at Alva, whose eyes suffused with tears as she said with emotion, "Mother says you must not humor the men too much."

She had not visited with Alva as Charles had said he disliked her way of speaking of her husband. Neither did Madge approve of her constant spirit of complaint.

CHAPTER VIII.

A MISUNDERSTANDING.

ALVA Wynan lived in a beautiful home close by Marjorie and if peace was not within its walls it was not the fault of builder or upholsterer; but it takes more than four walls and beautiful surroundings to make a home.

Let us step into the cosy little dining room and see.

The master of the house had just left the lunch table when a peevish voice called:

"Frederic, I would like to go to the Carnival this afternoon; will you come with me?"

"I cannot, dear, as this is one of our unusually busy days, and Rand's man is here on business with the firm."

"Oh, it is always business, business! I am sorry I ever married."

"Well, perhaps you are not the only one who is sorry."

Lighting a cigar he started down the street leaving a very angry woman in his wake.

"I don't believe he has business to keep him. I'll see. Mrs. Thornell says men just make these excuses and then go off and have a good time. I think she is right."

In less than two hours Alva was at the store inquiring for her husband.

"He is engaged in his private office," said the office boy, "and we never disturb him when he is busy."

"Well, I can wait," and, as if Fate had favored her, after what seemed to her hours, a very handsome woman came from the office with a very flushed face. She quickly dropped her veil and passed out. This was only fuel to the fire. Could anything be plainer? Instead of waiting she inquired of one of the bookkeepers who the lady was and learned that she was Mrs. Merivale, a young widow. What more was needed—a flushed face, a sudden dropping of the veil, a widow.

As she sailed away the clerks looked and laughed, knowing well that there was a smouldering volcano ready to burst forth.

Frederic felt sorry for the disappointment he had caused his wife and for his rude remarks at lunch, and hurrying through the troublesome routine of business said: "I'll deny myself to all but the most pressing business calls and leave my office early, take Alva for a drive and then to the opera tonight. I will get the tickets now," and he started off in a very happy frame of mind.

He was a broad-minded, genial soul, harboring no ill-will, and loving wife and home. He ordered a bunch of lovely roses and hurried away as soon as important business would permit.

Soon he was running up the steps, whistling

an opera bar, forgetting everything past, and meaning to atone for the afternoon's disappointment.

"Where is Mrs. Wynan?" he asked the maid as he passed her in the hall.

"In her room," was the reply.

He hastened forward and called to her. There was no response. Then he opened the door and was astonished to find his wife reclining in a large chair with a handkerchief to her eyes.

"Ah! a headache; I am sorry. I hurried, and just on purpose to take you for a drive; but, never mind, I'll stay and read to you. Perhaps I can drive away the demon."

"You had better take your widow for a drive; perhaps she will enjoy it more than I."

Frederic looked up astonished.

"What is this, Alva?"

"Oh, yes! So very innocent. Perhaps there was no widow in your office the entire afternoon. No wonder you could not accompany me to the Carnival."

"I assure you Alva there is some mistake."

"Perhaps I am blind and don't know when I see a woman coming out of my husband's private office."

Frederic, always quick tempered, studied a few moments and then jumped up and started for the door; he was too provoked to reply and had

tried so many times to control his hasty temper.

"Oh, yes; I suppose you recollect it at last."

"Alva, this lady—"

"Don't say lady to me. No lady would go to an office and see a married man. The shameless creature!"

By this time Frederic was half way down the stairs, and, as he left, slammed the door.

Then he asked 'what shall I do until evening?' He had left word at the store that he would not return that evening and surely it would not do to return while he was angry. With that thought uppermost in his mind he started for the club room, and what was to have been such a pleasant evening was ended in gloom and anger by husband and wife.

As he did not return to dinner of course she supposed, in her over-strung imagination, he had spent his entire evening with the widow—an innocent little woman who had made a special request to speak with a member of the firm in regard to an over-due bill, and, as Frederic had insisted on an early payment, the flushed face and dropping veil was the consequence.

At last, as home was no longer home, Frederic insisted on closing the house and taking rooms at the hotel.

Still the green-eyed monster followed, and if

he spoke pleasantly to one of the ladies, then it was she whom he was paying his most direct attention to.

Little dreamed Alva how, in her intensely selfish life, she was driving this noble man away.

She seemed to care less for this than for dwelling on her own selfish whims.

She made every woman in the house her confidant and told how she was abused, mistreated and shamefully neglected, little realizing she must make herself lovable if she wished to be loved.

It is utterly impossible to compel love, and her would-be friends simply widened the breach by their gossip.

With all of this home worry Frederic felt that he could not carry on his business successfully. His nights were spent in tossing and his days in dread. One day he arose in his manhood and said, "Alva this must come to an end."

"Well, not any too soon to suit me."

She had thought that she could bring him to her feet again. For once she was mistaken. He offered her a separate maintenance and she accused him of wanting to install some other woman in her place. At last, when she was made to understand, through a lawyer, that she could apply for a bill of divorcement, she could see but dimly what a great mistake she had made.

The women who had dropped a word here and

there laughed her to scorn, and other friends, seeing the storm brewing, had fled.

She, a ship-wrecked mariner, was at sea on account of her ill-natured selfishness. When, as a last resort, she tried to compromise, Frederic told her he could not live with her, as he had ceased to love her. She then realized the meaning of 'bear and forbear.'

CHAPTER IX.

A LIBERTINE TEMPTS A VIRTUOUS WOMAN.

IT was Editha and Adair's first Sabbath in their new home. As Editha had always been accustomed to attend church—her grandparents being of the old school Presbyterians, and her mother having adhered strictly to the observance of the Sabbath, it was therefore only natural for Editha to say to her husband, "Shall we attend church this morning, Adair?"

"I think not. I have a friend or two to dinner to-day."

He thought he might just as well commence and have her changed to his views at once, as he did not believe in these Puritanical notions, as he called them.

Barrington and several rather loud young men came to dinner.

It seemed to Editha that they drank more wine than was at all prudent. Barrington stared boldly at Editha, which caused the blood to come to her face from mortification. As she left the dining room the gentlemen repaired to the smoking room.

A few minutes later she heard foot-steps, and, looking up, was surprised to see Barrington enter the parlor alone. He came close to her. His face was flushed from wine. She arose and offered him a chair, which he drew close to her and, with a broad stare, said:

"Mrs. Aberdeen, I think we are treated rudely not to see more of my lady."

As Editha supposed it was Adair's mother whom he meant she said:

"She is not at home to-day, but is spending the week at Abbyford."

This was too much for Barrington. He laughed immoderately.

"My dear lady, I assure you it is the present Mrs. Aberdeen I mean; why seclude yourself from us in this way? We lose the spice of life if we miss the ladies."

She tried to appear civil yet felt degraded by this man's too familiar ways, and was horrified when he stepped up and put his fingers under her chin, saying:

"I think our friend Adair ought to feel proud of his wife."

Her astonishment knew no bounds.

"Sir, do you realize whom you address?"

Just then in stepped the others, all more or less under the influence of liquor. How her heart burned within her as she tried to appear calm; all unused to such things, so strange and foreign to her ideas of right. This insult of Barrington was more than she could bear. How she longed for the quiet peace of her own home—the restful Sabbath of her girl-hood.

That evening she spoke to her husband, and

asked him if it would not be better to have his friends on some other day, as it did not seem right to entertain them on the Sabbath, and he replied, "No, little Puritan."

He had called her this on every occasion when she had tried to speak with him seriously about the different things that came up in life. She now told him of Barrington's free manner. He laughed in a boisterous way.

"That's nothing; it's his way."

"I do not care to meet him and hope you will not invite him here again."

He walked off and she saw no more of him that night. She breathed more freely, feeling glad of this respite from the husband and his friends.

They left for the shooting lodge next day.

After they had gone she walked out on the veranda to quiet her troubled spirits. Noticing some loose roses that climbed over she bent down to tie them up. As she raised her head she was surprised to see Barrington returning alone.

"I forgot my shooting jacket and had to return for it; I felt I could not leave without a word to my lovely 'Lady Macbeth.'"

"Sir, will you leave at once?"

With that he came close to her, took her hand and pressed it to his lips. She snatched it away and stepped back.

"Mr. Barrington, I have told you once for all

I cannot permit this familiarity! Will you leave at once?"

He dropped on his knees and said:

"Mrs. Aberdeen, you are not appreciated as you ought to be. If you were mine I would see that you were not left alone."

"Sir, I command you to leave this house at once, and in no way ever presume to address me again."

She walked quickly into the house and closed the door.

She realized, as she sat brooding over this unpleasant affair, that there was nothing in common between herself and husband and his companions. She wondered if their lives would ever be different from what they now were. How could her husband be a boon companion to that loathsome man? Thus did she, early in life, realize the mistake of marrying a man she knew nothing of, and she broke down in one of her long, bitter spells of weeping. She felt it would be impossible to spend a life-time in this way.

As the days passed first one and then another asked her if she was not lonesome when her husband was absent, and she replied to each, "Yes, so lonesome," but she felt in this she was false. She blamed herself for this, and yet, how could she tell the world she was glad he was gone? and she a bride of only a few months!

So it was a constant time of false statements, fretting and worrying. Thus early in life had the young girl begun living a double life, appearing to the world to be a happy, loved and loving wife, yet in her innermost soul condemning herself for these very acts. Trained from childhood in purity, innocence and frankness; she looked at herself with horror as she assumed this different character. If at this time she could have had a loyal friend to advise with, how different might have been the results of her after life. She sometimes wondered if the old Presbyterian doctrines were not true, that some were foreordained to be saved and others lost? Surely such surroundings had caused her to sin; why was this permitted or allowed? She blamed heaven for permitting it, and then blamed herself for committing the sin—her conscience keeping her on the rack.

CHAPTER X.

A FAMILY SKELETON UNEARTHED.

MRS. ABERDEEN sat alone looking over her work, while a stray smile now and then stole on the sweetly serious face, reflecting the inward thoughts: "Perhaps it will be different; he will love me and it may be different. Mother says all men are so." She arose with a sigh, her eyes full of unshed tears, and, tenderly, lovingly, folding the dainty embroidery, lace and ribbons, laid them carefully away in her work-basket, as she murmured softly to herself: "I shall have something to love! Now I'll prepare for dinner, and then take my walk through the park. Annette," she called softly. Her maid appeared: "I will walk before dinner, as mother dines with us to-day, and we have three hours yet."

A dreamy look came into her eyes as they sauntered away through the park.

Annette, gathering leaves and sprays, wandered away, and Mrs. Aberdeen sat down in an old rustic chair to rest and dream. She was aroused by the prattle of a child, and, looking up, saw a little boy, and what struck her most was the strong likeness to her husband. Just as he held out his little chubby hands with a wild flower, someone snatched it away, dragging the child back, who showed how he resented this by loud

screams. Editha, thinking some rude nurse was abusing her charge, and loving children so tenderly, stepped quickly to her side saying, "Let the child go; do not punish him, he only offered me a flower."

Such a sullen, vicious face was raised to her's that she involuntarily stepped back in amazement.

"And so, my fine lady, perhaps you'll mind your own affairs; you have no more rights here than I, much less to tell me what I shall or shall not do with my own."

"I beg pardon; I was—I thought—"

"Who cares what you thought? His father said I might come here in the mornings. You, with your fine airs, have no more rights here than I have!"

Annette, hearing loud voices and seeing her mistress standing, looking so amazed, hastened to her side.

"Oh, come away! Come away, Mrs. Aberdeen," in her agitation taking hold of her arm and pulling her along at a rapid rate.

Mrs. Aberdeen stopped Annette with the question, "Who is this woman? Is the child her's? Why did she get so angry? I am sorry I mistook her for a nurse; she was so young looking. I must convince her that it was a mistake," feeling, in her kind heart sorrow for the ill-will of the girl.

"Oh, come away, Mrs. Aberdeen; do let us go in."

"Annette!" Mrs. Aberdeen spoke with dignity, "Please tell me who she is, that I may send her a note. I see she has walked rapidly in the opposite direction, and it will be impossible for me to offer her an apology."

"I cannot tell you. I should lose my place if I did. It is only hear-say."

This aroused all the inquisitiveness of the keen intellect.

"Tell me who this girl and child is Annette or most assuredly you will lose your place for not answering a civil question. What ails you?" seeing such a look of distress on the girl's face.

"It is—it was—only the cook said she wasn't proper, and you must not know, and—and you—"

"Why should I not know? Poor girl! She has had her trouble and her head is turned perhaps, and what else?"

"That the child is—oh! oh! that it looks like your husband."

She broke down and covered her face with her apron, whimpering, "I wasn't to tell."

Editha stood spell-bound, could hardly realize the full meaning of what she had heard.

Was this so? No it could not be.

Dazed and stunned she went on, not heeding Annette until she reached the house.

"Annette, tell Mrs. Aberdeen I am indisposed and will have some tea in my own room. Send the cook to me immediately after dinner."

"Yes'm!" and Annette hurried away.

While waiting for Mrs. Ames, the cook, Editha wrung her hands in nervous excitement, feeling as though she would suffocate.

Mrs. Ames came after dinner was over and said, without waiting for Editha to speak, "Hannette, she be such a fool any way, but hits not much use minding her. My old man said hit was a shame."

"Mrs. Ames, who is the young girl and child whom Annette and I met in the park?"

"Hit is the park-keeper's daughter, Hisadell Carter."

"And the child?"

"Well they do say hit is—"

"Whose?" asked Editha, her face almost as white as marble; "whose?"

"Her's."

"What more?"

"And that—but hit is he'rsa'—that—well, my lady, it is nothing but my old man's chat, and he is daft."

"Mrs. Ames, will you tell me what is said, at once?"

"Well, they do say the master did see her as his misses, but that was before you came; and hit

looks like him as two peas," with one horrified glance at the face of the girl wife.

Editha sank down on the bed, lying so cold and still with her blue eyes half open and her soft hair, with its glint of gold, strewn over the white counter-pane which was not as white as her own pale cheeks.

A dumb terror came over Mrs. Ames as she rang the bell in peals. The sound of hurrying feet came along the hall and Editha's mother entered the room.

She hurried to the bed and pulled aside the silken draperies; then, such a cry as rang through the house; it curdled the blood in their veins, and sitting bolt upright Editha stared wildly around.

The cook stole out amidst the wild confusion.

Mrs. Lavance put her arms around her child.

"Editha, what is it?"

"I will not believe it; I cannot believe it. Mother, it is not so," almost screamed the now frantic girl. "Tell me it is false—all false; but I feel it; I know it, Oh, why did you say it?"

Another shriek, so unearthly, that it brought Mrs. Aberdeen on the scene. One look, then, owing to her well-schooled nerves, she ordered all from the room.

"Roland, send Parks for the doctor at once. Mrs. Lavance, do not talk to her. Editha," going to the side of the now frantic girl, "your unlady-

like excitement is unpardonable. We are not accustomed to such public demonstrations."

It all fell unheeded on the ears of the poor girl, who now sank down in another swoon, lying so cold and still, that even Mrs. Aberdeen, with all her self-control, showed that she feared the worst.

Just then Dr. Atherton entered, and, going hastily to her, assured them that life was not extinct. He shook his head as he ordered the best nurse to be brought immediately, and remained after sending for the noted Dr. Rehold.

With anxious hearts they waited through the long night and all the next day. When the doctor came out of the room in the evening, to return again and remain, he said there was hope. He feared the worst from this great nervous shock, then asked: "What caused it?"

No one knew; so the doctors hoped and questioned.

What a blessed thing is oblivion to pain and sorrow!

Was it life or death? The little life that she had looked forward to as a solace in her own lonely life, had gone out with one faint sigh, never more to know of earthly sorrow. Thus had the mother, in her wild agony, saved herself many future days of pain and suffering.

For weeks there was little hope, only that life

still existed. By and by, her strong constitution triumphed. Under the skillful treatment of the two noted physicians she slowly came back to life, but such a change! You would not know our Editha of old

CHAPTER XI.

NO WORSE THAN OTHER MEN.

WILL you send Mr. Aberdeen to me?" was the request Editha made one morning.

He came into the room with a shuffle, after taking a brandy and soda. He was wont to say, "Take a brandy and soda if you are going through a trying ordeal."

He had not seen her since her sickness. She had begged so piteously not to allow anyone to see her, that the doctor said it was best to admit no one for fear of a relapse. Since her convalescence she had her meals in her own room, and had seen Mrs. Aberdeen at intervals.

Adair had heard the tale of the park encounter and nerved himself accordingly, but was not prepared to see the sad, pale face.

Editha did not rise to meet him, she felt to do so would unnerve her, and she must meet this trial face to face. Now that the opportunity had come she could not speak but sat staring like one demented. The white face and wild-staring eyes, would have unnerved anyone with less sang-froid than Adair.

"What will my lady have? You sent for me," holding out his hand in a friendly way.

She drew back, and put up her hands as if to ward off something uncanny.

Her tongue was loosened.

"Mr. Aberdeen, we will meet henceforth as strangers: I sent for you to tell you this."

"Well, Little Puritan, and why?"

"Need you ask me why? This woman who is the mother of your child will answer. If you have one spark of manhood left you will go to her and right this great wrong, if you can. But that is impossible. You have wronged me also beyond repair. Why did you make me an accomplice in this great evil against this woman and helpless child? Had I known this, I would have cut off my right arm before I had done this thing."

She felt like giving way in her great misery.

"I'm no worse than other men. I did not want to marry her, and you just let that business alone. Aren't you provided for? I'll see she don't worry you, and I'll dismiss half of these gossiping servants. You'll think better of this tomorrow." He stood leaning with his elbow on the mantle, as if he needed support, then stepped forward as if he would come to her.

"Stay, do not come nearer! I never wish you to mention my name again in connection with the woman you have betrayed." She arose to her feet, every line of her tall figure uplifted to its fullest height, tingling with burning indignation; the girlish face quivering with pain.

"Is this your code of honor, that you would keep a wife and a mistress?"

An uneasy laugh broke from Adair.

"I think you are not responsible for what you say, to talk like this."

"I am aware of one thing," said Editha, "that our marriage is a grand failure, and well it may be when every underlying principle is wrong. We will henceforth meet as strangers."

She turned and sank wearily into the chair, covered her face with her hands, then burst into one of those terrible paroxysms of weeping that had been the only means that had saved her reason. This left her in a low state of prostration, which lasted for days, and was followed by a morbid desire to see no one, and to be entirely alone. It was only the past week that she had been able to walk out each day with the nurse.

When they came to the lake she would beg the nurse to leave her alone. Then she would brood over her woes, and hug them to her as a friend.

When Adair Aberdeen stepped out of his room that day and went to his mother's, it was to have a confidential talk; but what passed between mother and son will never be known.

He left her room muttering.

Mrs. Aberdeen was determined to hide this breach from the world, and that could only be ac-

complished by having a series of house parties. Invitations were out for several ladies, the gentlemen having gone for a month's shooting. Perhaps in time all would calm down, and this one more wrong act of her son would be hidden from the world.

She broached the subject to Editha, who tried to inform her of her decision to separate quietly from Adair. To that Mrs. Aberdeen replied: "We will not discuss family grievances at present, my dear; it is quite necessary to forget or lose sight of the little cares and whims."

Editha turned away sick at heart.

Was it a whim? Was she in a measure to blame as well as Adair? Why had she not known more of him before she married? Why not have waited? But she could not help herself and fell again to weeping.

Mrs. Aberdeen was not a woman who was cruel by nature, but she was of a family which had some of the best of blood in its veins. In the past generation there had been a disreputable great grand father in the family, and by the laws of transmission, the evil had developed in her son. She, with several other members of her family, had so strongly and persistently ignored this man for his loose morals, that, as if out of revenge of this, her son had inherited all of his characteristics, causing her many secret tears, and

sleepless nights. Yet those who knew her doubted if she knew anything of his many escapades.

At heart she was one who suffered and was silent.

All gave her credit for having long since ceased to feel, so carefully had she guarded her words and actions. That she was a woman of many resources was to be seen in her move to bring peace out of chaos, and yet keep her family skeleton from view. This move proved most skillful.

The invitations were sent after the shooting party had gone.

"Editha would be so lonely, and must have company after her long illness, as she was inclined to melancholy," Mrs. Aberdeen informed her dear friend. She was ready to sacrifice all else to have her returned to her wonted health, and only by lively company could this be accomplished.

Her secret hope was, it will prevent open rupture and scandal.

They could take her abroad as soon as she was able to travel, and surely Editha and her son would patch up this misunderstanding in some way, as she termed it to herself. Indeed, she was truly willing to sacrifice herself to bring this about. Little she reckoned on the brave young life, that

was striving for the right. She still hoped that Editha would reform this son of her love. She had yet to learn that it is a mistaken task to imagine a pure young girl can reform a blase man, who has spent his boyhood and young manhood in immoral ways, and bad company.

CHAPTER XII.

TREADING ON DANGEROUS GROUND.

ONE day as Editha was taking one of her long walks through the park, she sat down to rest. Soon she was conscious of some one coming toward her.

She raised her eyes and beheld a man approaching. His dark hair was tinged with gray, and a pair of brown eyes were lifted as he bowed and passed on.

Her heart beat almost to suffocation as she arose and walked to the next chair and sank into it. What was it, this strange feeling, was it fear? No, a pain; really a pleasant pain, with an inward knowledge that something strange had happened in her life! She felt a desire to know who he was? A pleasant hope, that helped in her despair, thrilled her as she wondered if she would ever see him again? Did he know of her life? Would he be patronizing as others were?

She arose and tried to walk, and felt a strange dizziness as if her head were light; a strange light was over all and it seemed that his image had been burned into her soul!

Finally, after walking as one in a trance, sitting down here and there to rest, she reached the house.

All at once the thought flashed through her

mind, 'is this love?' Then she seemed to wake to a sense of the unfitness of the thought for she, who believed in purity, was she not a married woman? Then the thought of how the world looked at these things passed through her mind and she did not try to drive away the impression.

She must know who he was. She would ask without letting them know why.

When she reached the house she went at once to the library.

It was always quiet there and she could dream without being disturbed. She had seated herself in an easy chair in a shady corner, and was surprised when, a few moments later, she heard voices coming that way.

She did not know they had visitors.

The door opened and Mrs. Aberdeen entered. With her was a gentleman, the same one who had bowed to her in the park. Her heart stood still, then gave a great bound as Mrs. Aberdeen said to her:

"I thought you were out. Allow me to introduce one of our very old friends, Adelbert Abbyford."

To speak and not faint seemed impossible. With a desperate effort she controlled this feeling and spoke. What she said she never knew. Finally she found herself talking to this man. His

IS MARRIAGE A FAILURE?

quiet voice rested her as she had not felt rested for years.

He told her that he was just on the point of leaving when he remember he wanted a book and came to the library to get it.

At parting he held out his hand and Editha mechanically put her's into it. Then he said:

"You need not rise as you are not strong, but this balmy air will soon give you health and strength, I trust."

How she thanked him she never knew. Then came the thought 'would she ever see him again?'

He was so different from all others, so quiet and sincere in his manner, that she longed to go to her own room to dream of him, but she could not rise.

She heard his foot-steps going away and would always remember how his voice sounded as he thanked her for her invitation to call again.

He said:

"I will come with mother."

She wondered if they would come soon, then she was aroused out of this dreamy, unconscious state by Mrs. Aberdeen saying:

"I hope you will like Mrs. Abbyford and her son; he is one of the best of men. They will be here for a fortnight."

She wondered if she had been asleep and if it

had been a dream—it seemed so long since she had seen him.

The following days were passed in dreaming of this stranger.

Mrs. Aberdeen had said in speaking of him, that he was “all a woman could ask for embodied in one person—kind, gentlemanly restful; one never tires talking to him.”

Surely he was a son a mother could well be proud of.

Editha felt she could better bear to meet those people when he would be present. Gentlemen were not invited, yet, as an old family friend, he was coming with his mother.

When Editha reached her room the re-action set in. She wished that he was not coming, then again she felt that he alone would understand her. Sometimes she was in a fever of excitement.

Editha had become morbid, shunning company until Mrs. Aberdeen declared it useless and that she must try to bring her out.

She shrank from the questioning gaze of those she had known, who would say:

“Poor child, it is too bad; I suppose you do not care to go out much?”

She was so sensitive. She felt that they knew all and the very bitterness of death entered her soul.

She shrank within herself more and more.

Whole days would she spend in the park alone. This proud, beautiful, broken-hearted woman could not even read, so great was her sorrow.

Her friends were pitying her for the loss of her child—none knowing the real cause of her sorrow.

The only thing in her nature which never changed was her love for little children and all who were helpless.

Thus are we in our griefs, let them be what they will, brought nearer to some of God's creatures. Affliction is one page in life's book, learned word by word. Editha had turned some pages in that book.

She left the house more despondent than usual and spent most of the day in the park. She had turned toward the house finally and was very much surprised to hear footsteps close by her. On looking up she was not a little surprised to see Mr. Abbyford coming to look for her. He and his mother had arrived in advance of the others who were not expected until the morrow.

She held out her hand. He could see how helpless she had become.

"Let us sit here in the garden and talk. Mrs. Aberdeen sent me to fetch you."

She did not wait for him to say more but answered impetuously:

"I cannot, I will not meet these people. I detest the world! Why could I not have died?"

"My dear Mrs. Abbyford, you are one small fraction of this world."

"The longing to leave it is ever present, day and night, but I suppose I must stay."

Taking a seat by her he said:

"You are a lonely, broken-hearted girl; you have my entire sympathy."

The hard look still remained in her eyes. Looking up she said:

"Will you take me away from here? I cannot say! I loathe him! Only to leave!"

He took her hand in his.

"My dear Mrs. Aberdeen, I cannot do that. You know not what you ask. Could that wrong right the other? You would lose your self-respect and the evil would be greater than the first! You know how much I honor and respect you. As a brother would so will I shield you from yourself. You have my whole sympathy. If at any time you need me send for me and I will come."

"I cannot stay here. The marriage with this man is loathsome to me. It is in the sight of heaven no marriage. I feel I have ruined my life! Why should I stay here? What does the world care if I go or stay."

"Child, you know not what you say. In the bitterness of your spirit you would do desperate things. Think it out, what would be the result if you should leave here in that way? I heartily

agree with you that as your marriage tie is so loathsome, you are not bound in consciousness to keep it; but in the eyes of the world and the civil law which you respect, could you do otherwise than have a separate maintenance?"

"I have prayed the heavens to release me, but the heavens are brass. I dare not take my life! Oh, take me away!"

A man with less moral principle would have taken advantage of this helpless, pleading girl, but Adelbert, schooled to sorrow and suffering, aided her by his wise counsel.

"If you feel that you must go, as an American citizen you have a perfect right to take the keeping of your person for the soul's sake."

He knew this young girl was not capable of judging in her frenzied state.

"If you feel that you must leave it all, then I will advise with my mother and see what can be done. My advice is, do not run away. Go to a quiet place and take up some study—something that will take your mind from it all. In your helpfulness to others you will find the solace your heart craves. The tie you can never dissolve. The law that binds you is lasting while life lasts. Death only can dissolve it. Marriages of this day are based on anything but true love. Some on a desire for a home, some for wealth or position. Is that marriage in the sight of God? Nay! Did

you marry for love? Pardon me if I speak plainly. Was there any motive other than the desire to live near the one that was all the world to you—whom you could stand by in sickness, poverty, good or evil report? This marriage service of ours is grand—embodying all—but do we thus marry? No, rarely! Does not our inner natures tell us there is something higher than mere sensual pleasure or profit? Yes, and yet we stifle these grand impulses that would lift us nearer the Eternal, and come down to grovel in the filth and mire of sordid motives. These are not marriages in the sight of God. The man and woman who loves with a pure unchanging love, hand in hand before God, are married more truly than priest or pope could do; yet could we advocate this? No. It would give too free license to the pretenders.”

Adelbert's words bore conviction.

Editha sat still and silent. Tears were coursing from the now softened eyes.

By this, Abelbert knew the present frenzy had passed and that calmer reason had entered the soul.

“Let us go in and, with my mother, I will advise you.”

CHAPTER XIII.

ADELBERT TEACHES EDITHA A LESSON.

THE next morning after her talk with Adelbert, she had wandered down by the lake at the foot of the hill

“If I could only get away from it all, and from those people in the house,” she mused. “How can I live and keep up appearances.”

She hid herself behind some old willows, that grew near the lake, to dream. She heard voices. As they came near she recognized them as visitors at the house.

“What is the story of young Mrs. Aberdeen?” one was asking.

“Oh, dear, I can’t tell, all mixed up with a girl and jealousy, I hear. She had never been in society before her marriage. A most unfortunate affair. I simply allude to this; I am sure you will never mention it.” As they passed on she came forward; all the color had died from her face.

“Why should they say anything against me? I have done no wrong,” and she looked away with a bitter, angry light in her eyes, and walked rapidly toward the house.

“I shall go to my room and stay there,” she declared to herself.

Coming down the pathway was Adelbert

Abbyford. He could see that she was very bitter, and turning he walked with her.

"Can I be of use to you?"

"It is useless I know, but I am very unhappy."

He knew the wounds were deep, and her sorrow great, and said, "Let us sit on this rustic seat."

The grief that filled her heart caused her very lips to whiten with pain. Her despair sprang into life and was terrible in its intensity.

"The worst has come! No pain in the future can ever again wring my heart. It is numb."

"Every one can master a grief, but he that has it," said Adelbert. "I wish that I could help you."

"If I could only die."

"This is wrong" he said.

"It is a simple thing to give advice, Mr. Abbyford but you do not know sorrow."

"Into each life some rain must fall. In your present state we must not talk; it is best to *be still*. It is easier to still the tempest than to still the terrible waves of passion that sweep over the human heart, when we feel the wrongs we cannot right. Why beat the bars, until exhausted we drop limp and powerless?"

Taking her hand in his own warm grasp, so that the wave of sympathy would run through the

human hand down to the crushed heart and soothe it like oil on the troubled waters, he sat and watched her in silence for a while. You who have known sorrow should take the hand of your fellow travelers, and learn in this way to comfort, as you never can by words in their direst time of need.

How much there is in the touch of a human hand?

“Yes, those are the only words that will express it,” said Editha, “the storms of the soul, beating the bars. Oh! Mr. Abbyford what shall I do?” Then again a tempest, more violent than the first, paralyzing the young life, numbing its faculties, came o’er her.

Still holding her hand in his he repeated, in a soothing, quiet, restful voice these words:

“Oh, when bowed down with grief and pain
Sad memories be thy state,
In sorrow washed with pitying rain,
Knock at the Golden Gate.

Heed not the storms on life’s rough way,
Hope whispers ‘courage’, not too late,
Be brave, soon breaks the day—
Knock at the Golden Gate.

Above the clould-rift love appears,
Love mighty, true and great,
Bury the past, cast out thy fears—
Knock at the Golden Gate.

Beyond its portals you will see
Love's brightest, best estate,
Would you enter there and happy be—
Knock at the Golden Gate."

By and by the sobs ceased and Editha looked up with all the fire of bitterness washed out by the deluge of tears.

Oh tears, blessed tears; "they give relief when else the heart would break."

A long silence ensued, then Editha looked up and asked:

Did you have a sorrow in your own life, Mr. Abbyford?"

"Sorrow and love makes the world a-kin," said Adelbert. "At one time I thought no human heart could suffer as I then suffered, but I have lived to learn there are others who have gone farther and deeper in sorrow. That is, their sorrows have driven them to death by their own hands. I know this is greater than mine, yet I can readily see how this is. It is braver to live than die at such times. I have suffered all I think possible for a man to suffer and live; it would have been easier to die than go through the long years, and live it down. I have felt very bitter at times, but after long years, I too have crushed this out of my life, and believe me, dear Mrs. Aberdeen, nothing would give me greater pleasure than to help you, cast the past out of your life, and make your life

all that it should be in the future. Would it ease your own sorrow if I should tell you of my life?"

She assented.

"I was an only child, loved by my mother as a noble woman loves the child of a husband who was her all and all. How often she has said, 'Adelbert, I could not have lived after your father's death if it had not been for you. My dear son, you are the image of your father. Thank God for wifeness and motherhood.' You must know my mother; to know is to love her. How often in her loving counsel she has said, 'Never disgrace your name by one unmanly act or ignoble deed.' She guided my wayward steps, even until manhood, by her wise and loving care. What I am today I owe to my mother; my father died when I was nine months old. I never withheld one act of my life from her—*Blessed Mother*. If our women of today only realized how they mould the character of their sons through true motherhood! But I must not moralize. I grew to manhood with all this instilled into every fiber of my being. When twenty-seven while visiting friends in the south, I met a beautiful girl. I loved her, as those only of a strong nature can love. Not a sickly sentiment, but gave her my all, little dreaming it was not returned in full—that her favor was simply an intrigue to capture a wealthy

husband urged by a mother no more worthy than the daughter."

He felt a shiver pass through Editha's hand.

"Do I weary you?"

"No, please go on."

"That she cared no more for me than any gentleman of our acquaintance was evident after our marriage. She objected to living with my mother. We then bought a beautiful villa close by. Her mother and sister came to live with us. I learned it was only an excuse, a place to live where they might have a *banker, not a home*. It was constantly filled with strangers of all sorts—any one who had money, without regard to morals, it was at my home. I met your husband and his friend Barrington.

"My wishes were set at naught. One evening I said, 'Mildred, do not have company tonight; let us have a quiet evening at home. I wish a long talk with you, my dear.'

"'Oh, nonsense! I have no use for love-making. We go to Mme. Durand's ball. I have accepted. Will you come, too? If you don't wish remarks you had better. The carriage will be here at nine; but suit yourself as I can go with sister and Barrington—he is such good company. Am sorry to say it will be the last time as I suppose this closes the season. I shall have to retire to

seclusion then, but it will not be with good grace, I assure you.'

" 'But, Millie dear, do you not realize what the results may be with all the excitement and late hours?'"

" 'I only hope for one result'" said she with a sneering laugh.

"How my heart sank, I had looked forward to one of the proudest moments of my life, when I should have an heir; one of the highest honors, one of the grandest gifts from the Eternal.

"In my blind love, I thought this would draw out the love of the young girl-wife, and dreamed of the yet happy home with wife and baby. Even this was to be a vain hope."

"When the winter was past and the spring sunshine shone glad and bright, and nature shook out her carpet of green; a tiny, frail little girl came into my heart and life—a winsome, wee thing. How I loved her! and the mother yet more. 'Darling,' I said, 'is not this a wondrous gift, our little daughter.'

" 'I see nothing so wonderful! you must provide a wet nurse at once; I shall not tie myself in a nursery; I have none of the sentimental notions of the Abbyfords.'

"I realized if the little, helpless babe could not draw out the mother love, surely it was lacking.

I asked it then. I know it now. Our marriage was a failure!

“The tiny little babe was left entirely to the care of the nurse; always frail, it seemed a blossom from paradise to wither and die.

One night Mildred had gone to a ball—the first she had attended since the birth of her child, and I had a foreboding of evil.

When morning broke, I found Mildred had not returned. I questioned, Mrs. Mortimer, her mother. She commenced to whimper about my not being kind to Mildred and driving her to despair. Driven to frenzy I said.

“‘Do you know where Mildred is?’ She pretended not to know. I questioned the servants; they knew nothing, she had gone to the ball with her sister and Barrington. I questioned Maud. She had not seen her since she and Barrington had started to return home at twelve o’clock.

“‘My worst fears were confirmed; I had a private detective look for clues. They had left and gone abroad—sailed that morning.

“‘This was my death blow! I thought not of myself but of the baby girl. Her mother’s shame would always crown her.

“‘In my bitterest sorrow I thought of my mother, but she had gone on a long visit to some distant relatives shortly after my marriage.

Where should I turn; what do? In my frenzy I beat the bars, only to fall powerless.

“I can never tell you of my shattered idol, desolate home, motherless babe—worse than motherless! Just then baby sickened. Mrs. Mortimer offered to care for the child. No! Never, would I allow that worldly woman the care of my child, my all. Then she proposed to go abroad and look for Mildred. I felt relieved when fitting them out. She and Maud sailed, knowing their day was done. Since then I have held no communication with them.

“One night an angel came and took my babe home. Why could He not have left me my child? I almost cursed heaven, and now in my sober thoughts I bless the kind providence which said: ‘I love thee, I love thee, pass under the rod.’

“My mother came to me and has never left me since; has helped me live it down.

“Ten years ago I had a telegram saying Mildred was dying in Paris, alone and friendless. I went to her and brought all that remained of the loved and misguided woman, and laid her by her baby. He who rights all wrongs will make it plain some day. I have heard Barrington was here. He will shun me, not that I shall harm him, but he cannot meet me. The conscience of such

a man will punish him more than sword or pistol. I leave him in the hands of a higher power.

"When I say it is braver to live than die at such a time I know what it means.

"This terrible cyclone of human passion, sweeping over the soul, leaves it strewn with broken hopes, uprooted loves, barren and desolate!"

"Oh, forgive me, Mr. Abbyford!" said Editha. "How can you ever believe in any human being again? I will try to be a braver, better woman. God help me to overcome, and make my life of some use to others!"

"God grant it," said Adelbert; "I know he will."

"I will try to meet these people and do my duty."

At dinner a telegram was handed Mrs. Aberdeen saying her mother was seriously ill and that she must come to her at once.

CHAPTER XIV.

MRS. LAVANCE'S DEATH.

AFTER Editha came and the leaves began to fall Mrs. Lavance seemed to fail more rapidly and at Christmas tide it was plain to be seen she was slowly passing away to the land of the Leal.

The lonely, solitary wife was sorry company in a sick room, yet she hid her grief bravely. Her mother scarcely let her out of sight.

Editha still hoped when the warm winds of spring came, they would waft some healing on their wing. Vain hope! One lovely May day her mother seemed more restless than usual and asked to walk out.

"Why, mother dear, you have not been able to walk for some time; will it not tire you?"

The nurse thought it was best to humor this whim. Wrapping her carefully, she leaned on Editha's arm, going out into the beautiful sunshine, over the lawn, down where the roses and sweet briar grew!

"Your father planted them and named it Briarville."

She gathered some of the flowers and turned to the house, crossing the piazza and going into

the library she stood in front of her husband's portrait and looked at it long and lovingly.

"You are so like him," as she turned to the sad faced girl by her side, "Editha, I will lie down. Sit by me, child, so I may hold your hand."

In a short time her mind seemed to wander as she spoke of past events. Thoroughly alarmed, Editha sent at once for the family physician, an old friend as well. She watched him anxiously as he stooped over the bed to examine the heart. Lifting his head he looked long at the patient, attempted to arouse her, only to see her lapse into seeming intermissions of unconsciousness; Editha followed him to the door.

"I will call again at ten. If you have friends, send for them at once and keep up your courage. We will hope for the best; I fear the worst."

He felt he must prepare this young girl before the blow fell.

Editha hurried back to the bedside after sending a note to Mrs. Aberdeen.

Her mother was calling: "Editha—Editha—where — are—you? Come,—come — let — us — walk,—I—want—to—gather—the--flowers,—to--talk,—but —I — am — so — tired. No—no—I—meant—it—for—the—best,—your — very--best—interest; — no — Editha—I—I—did—not—say,—there—was—no—such—thing—as—love--it--was

— wrong — but — for — the — best; — well — well — child — do — you — hear — Editha? — I — will — not — forgive — myself.”

The voice was sharp and then sank to a whisper. The blinding tears were flowing over her cheeks, even down to the pillow, as Editha stooped to kiss her, saying in her old pet way, “Ma Mere, I am here, dear; just by you.”

She knelt and buried her face in the bed clothes.

The doctor came again at ten o'clock and was surprised to see the sunken appearance, the face had taken on in so short a time. He administered a sleeping potion to quiet her restless tossing.

“I will look in again in an hour or too,” and the busy doctor started on his rounds, leaving the nurse and the young girl with the dying mother. As he laid his hand on the bowed head, tears were in his own eyes, feeling how helpless he was to save the mother or comfort the sorrowing daughter.

“Mother! Mother! take me with you; do not leave me,” as all the old, wild, longing for death surged through her soul. The low sobs could never more arouse Mrs. Lavance, as she was silently floating away toward the unseen city. Every heart-beat was now but the splash of the oar; for the boatman pale was moving from the shore slowly, surely.

Editha heard the sound of light steps, then someone knelt by her side, an arm was thrown around her neck, a hand from the other side was placed upon her head by which she knew that Mrs. Abbyford and Adelbert were by her.

As the clock chimed out the midnight hour the fingers closed tightly, the word "forgive" was whispered, the soft breathing ceased, a sigh, and all that was once Mrs. Lavance lay cold and still.

Gentle hands lifted Editha and helped her to her room.

Mrs. Abbyford took a seat by the couch on which she was reclining, smoothed back the brown hair, and talked in a quiet, restful tone to the poor world-weary girl.

At times Editha wailed out her old refrain: "What shall I do? What shall I do? O! mother, why did you leave me."

"My dear girl, fear not," said Mrs. Abbyford in a low, soothing voice; "'fear not' saith the Master, 'fear not thou, for I am with thee. Be not dismayed for I am thy God. I will help thee, yea I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness,'" knowing well no words she could frame would afford comfort like these. Then she repeated:

Raise thy eyes to Heaven,
When thy spirit quails;
When by tempest driven,
Heart and courage fails,

The wild sobbing ceased. Mrs. Abbyford knew that the troubled heart was soothed, far better than words of her own could do.

Gently drawing the curtains and closing the door she stepped out to see if she could be of service in arranging for the funeral.

She found that Adelbert had seen to all.

The doctor had returned but, seeing Editha was at rest and under the care of such friends, he departed from the house of sorrow that all his skill could not stay.

A funeral followed.

They laid Mrs. Lavance in the family grounds, and all that Editha heard was "Dust to Dust—as a flower fadeth," and that only as one in a dream.

She was aroused by Mrs. Abbyford saying: "You will come with us, Editha, Adelbert will see to closing the house and have your business arranged. Come with us for the present."

And Editha gladly entered into this haven of rest and peace.

Her grief was silent but deep, having burned out the fire of her soul long since; it seemed as if a despair settled over her, leaving her only this one wish, "If I could but die!" It was not to be. Her work was not done; until then, she must bide her time.

CHAPTER XV.

RICHES OUTWEIGH MORAL DEPRAVITY.

IT was a month since Editha had laid her mother to rest, and she was still at Mrs. Abbyford's. "May I talk over our plans with you for my future?" said she one morning at breakfast.

"Certainly. Go to my room. I will give my orders for the day, then join you. It has every appearance of a rainy day so we will not be interrupted by visitors and can have a real heart to heart talk."

When she came Editha sat with a weary, dejected air, her head on her hands, looking at the dripping rain.

Mrs. Abbyford drew up a chair near her, and taking one of Editha's hands in her own said:

"My dear child, if you could leave it with the dear Father who ruled your life before the trouble came, does now and will when your troubles have passed away forever; how much better you would feel. Some one has said, God is a better judge than we are, as to whom it is safe to give happiness here. We have not talked freely of your affairs, but if you wish we will talk of them today and then I hope I may help you cast them out of your life, or at least that you

may be able to rise above them. I admire you more than I can say, for keeping your trouble to yourself; but now you tell me you wish to fit yourself for a profession and ask my advice. You are in no state to think or study; I would advise you to rest a year at least. Physically you need it. When your mind is in a more settled state then we will try and lay plans for the future. You have it within you yet to make a noble, helpful woman."

"I feel I never again can face the world! How often I have said to those who I knew were trying me, while they posed as friends, when they would ask, 'are you not lonely, Mrs. Aberdeen, when your husband is away?' I would answer, 'Oh! so lonely!' knowing every word was false. I was only too glad to have him gone."

"Better not to have replied than to have said that," said Mrs. Abbyford, "yet it is so hard to decide at the time what is best."

"Take courage Editha; you could not be a daughter of your father if you were not brave and courageous. Your father lost his life in one of the bravest of acts. It was in a memorable engagement. The enemy had repulsed and driven them to their last stronghold; had made a breach in their fortifications, and he saw the men falter; saw his general was wounded and yet, amidst the raining of bullets, he went on rallying his men for

a grand charge. Just then the chief gunner was cut down. Your father drew the staff around the General and, by almost superhuman effort, manned the cannon into the breach. By that grand, courageous move he turned the tide of war and saved the army. In so doing he lost his own life. Now, today, as this terrible battle rages within you, turn your guns into the breach; do not give up your stronghold, rally your forces. Dangers faced are half conquered. Right here before the world you must face this worse than an army—these unkind remarks, hints, looks, whisperings. Live them down!”

“If there is one thing more than another from which I shrink, 'tis the questioning of my friends.”

“You do not necessarily need to answer them, farther than to say, ‘I cannot speak of my private affairs.’ Say it kindly. The world cares little for any one’s individual woes and tears. Remember the saying ‘Laugh and the world laughs with you, weep and you weep alone.’ Nothing was ever truer. Trouble often brings to us patience, self control, fortitude, wisdom and sympathy. If you had not had your experience, could you ever have had that keener sympathy for others you have? Experience gives the thrill or touches the deeper chords that we use so little in our every day lives. If we do not profit by this our lives are full

of weakness and cowardice; control your feelings, my dear, and as a true woman, and as you have in the past, carry this grief in the future, so that others shall not feel the effects. Your heart will be sorely tried. Meet the world with kindly consideration."

"Mrs. Abbyford, I feel so bitter, though I do not see that I am altogether to blame."

"My dear, you will understand me when I say the world is not as heartless as we imagine. We are apt, more or less to comment on these matters ourselves."

"I would rather shun the world though, than try to face it. I have no bravery."

"Do you recollect these beautiful lines?

Oh, ye with banners and battle shot,
And soldiers to shout and praise,
I tell you the kingliest battles fought
Are fought in those silent ways.
But deep in a walled-up woman heart—
Of woman that would not yield,
But bravely, silently, bore her part—
Lo, THERE IS THE BATTLE-FIELD.

"This I think will apply to you and your mother-in-law. How bravely, and silently she has lived her life! How she has struggled to save her son! I never noticed the look of pain so plainly as during the time she was here last to visit you, at the time of your mother's funeral. How

kind of her to stand between you and the world, shielding you as best she could by telling others that a telegram did not reach your husband; then leaving you under my care while she had gone to a dying relative, closing her house. This will stop the tongues of gossips for the time at least. She never spoke to me of this, yet she begged Adelbert to go to him, as a friend; and try to affect a reconciliation.

"Sometimes, Mrs. Abbyford, I feel sorry for Adair. He ought to have married a woman who had something in common with himself. Perhaps he would have been happy. Unintentionally I wronged the man, for I know now I did not love him."

She stopped, a burning blush o'erspread her face.

"Yes, in this, Editha, you wronged him, yet innocently."

"Why should this fall to my lot? Surely I did not merit it! As a girl I tried to do right. If I sinned it was not willfully."

"I do not think it a punishment for your wrongdoing—simply the result or consequence attending on a broken law. I do not wish to cast any reflections on your mother, but in her all-absorbing love for you, she failed to see that it was not your best interest. You will understand me when I say there are many mothers who are too

ready to sacrifice their daughters to the God Mammon. The first question is, has he money? not, what is his mental and moral standing? Let a man be wholly immoral, unfit physically or mentally and have wealth, all his vices and defects are overlooked. He is flattered and courted by those who ought to inquire into his character, before entrusting any one's future life to his keeping. Would you or I either enter into a business partnership for life in any ordinary business—mercantile, law, or corporation—without first finding out all that pertained to that particular partnership? Would we not enquire whether the parties were honest, reliable and trustworthy? Even in the simple business matter of butler or housemaid we ask for reference, yet in this all important life partnership do we seek to know if they are worthy of the keeping of a pure young girl? Are they worthy to be the fathers of the sons and daughters that may be theirs? Will no hereditary taint follow such unions through life, that may blight and ruin some soul, or are they unions that will stand through good and evil report, homes whose influence reach into eternity? Or are they such as bring forth only evil? which crush and weaken virtue and purity, and trample them in the dust? Is that the meaning of our beautiful marriage service? You have heard women say *To obey* ought to be left out of the marriage service. What is

grander, what is more noble, child, than to obey all that is best and highest within us? If every young girl, every young man, could have instilled into every fiber of their being a higher conception of marriage, a truer understanding of the meaning, 'I take this man or woman for my wedded husband or wife, to have and hold, while life lasts,' would there be so many divorces? This lax law of divorce for every petty notion should be for protection only. Vastly better is legal separation, than children born under this bondage of sin—it is nothing less when love has ceased to exist. They could inherit nothing pure or true—only a heritage of shame, physical deformity and mental weakness."

CHAPTER XVI.

A CONSPIRACY AGAINST THE COUNT.

IT HAS been three years since the marriage of
“My Daughter, the Countess.”

They are at home and a discussion is going on in regard to the young heir, now eighteen months old.

“I will not permit him to be brought to the dining room,” Evadne had said.

“My dear Evadne, this is only after our meals are over, when we are alone.”

“I shall not consent to that so long as he is in charge of that horrid nurse. Why are you so opposed to an American nurse?”

“I am not; not at all, my dear. Find an educated American lady to take charge of him and I will favor the change, but I do most heartily disagree with the idea of having that coarse element take charge of Master Otwald. Do you know, my dear, that the impressions we receive even in babyhood often follow us all through life? The foreign nurses are not such as I would wish for our boy, but I offer this excuse for employing them, they cannot teach the child coarse words. Foleta cannot speak a word of English. When he is older we will have a thoroughly educated American governess to take charge of him.”

"Well, that is just one more of your odd notions. I shall go home to my mother if I cannot have any say here," and a pout followed.

She had quit hysterical tears long since, as they did not affect the Count as they had her father.

"Just what I want, my dear; now we are agreed at last," and catching baby in one arm he threw the other around his wife and waltzed around the dining room in the most undignified, un-Countish manner possible; while baby crowed with delight, both chubby hands clutching his father's hair.

Then they sat down all out of breath.

The Count motioned to Foleta and she took the baby from the room.

"Well, and we shall sail next month? I think the crossing will be good by that time. You begin at once on your toggery. Boies," as the footman appeared, "have the carriage at the door at two, and drive the Countess on a shopping tour. While she is engaged take the nurse and baby for a drive; it will do them both good as the day is lovely and the air bracing."

The Count had determined, shortly after his marriage that if there were children they should spend their earlier years in the presence of both father and mother. This accounts for the many

drives when baby was always one of the number, much against the mother's will.

In no instance was the nurse allowed out alone with the baby in the cab. Either the Count or his wife always accompanied them.

When his wife objected to this he said: "I have seen babies crippled for life, or left standing in the hot sun for hours until their eyesight was totally ruined. I will not permit it, neither will I permit the nurse to feed baby on soothing syrup to keep him quiet while she reads a novel."

Count Otwald determined on several things in his own household.

He was a noble-man not alone from title, but also from birth. He was broad-minded, educated and cultured—possessed every principle based on true manhood.

One marked characteristic was his ability to control his temper, which he had learned to do early in life.

While those who know him respected him they also obeyed him because he was firm as well as genial and kindly.

He soon learned his wife had had a very superficial training and realize more and more the truthfulness of what her father had said when he asked her in marriage.

On the eve of their marriage he and her father had had a long, confidential talk. What they said

is not known. Mrs. Erleigh was sure it referred to a settlement. It may have been—probably a settlement of certain vexed questions that might arise during the count's married life.

She was engrossed with her elaborate preparations for the morrow when she said to Evadne:

“I am heartily glad they have taken themselves off. It is such a relief to get rid of men at such times. Remember, Evadne, to get the Count out of your way as much as possible, and hold the reins in your own house. I see he is much like your father. That, I presume, is why your father and Alvan are so pleased with him. The very idea of his speaking the way he did about babies the other evening before his marriage! It was shocking! I am so glad you ran out of the room. I gave him a look, I tell you, and he soon changed the subject. I am afraid he has the same tendency for babies Alvan has. It may be some mental weakness. I am quite sure it is. But then he has a title and we can't have everything. Perhaps it would have been better to have taken the Earl. He had none of the crude ideas of the Count, and was so like other people. It will sound well to say you refused an Earl, but never let any one imagine your father ordered him out. Poor fellow, he was such a small, stylish man with such regal ways! Don't forget how I have ruled your father by tears and remaining in

my room. Nothing like tears! If you can't force tears then put your handkerchief to your eyes and sob—cultivate sobs—they are the next best, mind, and don't speak."

She paused a moment then continued:

"Why, I do believe Mme. Evolden has left a bow of ribbon off! What shall I do? The dress is ruined! Oh, no; here it is. I was saying, cultivate sobs and rest assured that you will have your own way through life."

If Mrs. Erleigh and her daughter thought hysterical weeping and sobbing would affect the Count, they were mistaken in their man.

CHAPTER XVII.

A CONFIDENTIAL CHAT.

ON their trip over they became acquainted with an elderly gentleman, his wife and a sweet-faced girl with the love-light in her eyes. The girl was Thelma Alwyne.

When the Count introduced her to Evadne, she was surprised to notice the bright blushes which o'erspread her face, but supposed her unaccustomed to society and forthwith was very patronizing.

She soon learned to love the sweet girl, who came each day to see the baby. She was, in fact, a very distant connection of the Count.

"Why have I never met this relative of yours," Evadne asked one day.

"Because she has been in Switzerland since leaving school. She traveled with a lady and gentleman, distant relatives of her mother's. She was a close student and very much in need of rest, and is to marry after her trip to America," explained the Count.

"Then we shall see more of her, I hope."

As if fearful of farther questioning he turned away.

One beautiful morning they sighted land, and as if inspired every American broke out with,

"My country 'tis of thee," and when they sang "From every mountain side let freedom ring," the count added his clear tenor voice, forgetting for the time that he was not an American. He afterward said to Mr. Erleigh:

"I breathed the inspiration of American citizenship and enthusiasm."

Alvan's joy knew no bounds when he at last carried the young Monarch from the carriage to the house on his shoulder, for the baby held out his hands to him at once; and Mrs. Erleigh looked to see if any one was in sight then said:

"If the house was full, Alvan would do just so. He is so odd, and his trip did not in the least improve him. In fact I am seriously alarmed about him, he seems in such a peculiar frame of mind, and occasionally breaks out into little fits of laughter. Even Lady Aisley noticed it. When I spoke to his father about him he laughed and said, 'The boy is all right. His trip was just the thing.' Well, well; they are both so very, very odd. I know it runs on the father's side. Now, if Alvan had been like any one else, he would have remained with us when we were abroad and married some Princess, or in some way shown his appreciation of my efforts in that direction. But no; he must take that long trip with those young men, and his father approved of it too. They are so very odd."

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Mrs. Erleigh had one more chance for public display when she gave a grand reception to the Count and Countess.

The reception was on the morrow night, and it was one of the loveliest May days. Mother and daughter were deep in the mysteries of dress and a very confidential chat.

“What dress will you wear, Evadne?”

“I will consult the Count.”

“Consult the Count about a dress? What does he know about a dress, pray?”

“Ah, mamma, he is very odd. I always consult him. Do you believe when I was presented to the queen he insisted on going to Madam Rommains with me and ordering my dress? I suggested a brilliant affair that was on exhibition, something similar to my first ball dress. He objected at once. I could have shook Mme. Rommains, she agreed with him so thoroughly, and the dress we decided to take cost at least two hundred dollars more. Pure white, entrain, covered with lace and pearls, necklace and armlets to match. The only ornament he would permit was a bouquet of Lillies of the Valley pinned to the waist, a fan and hand bouquet of Lillies of the Valley. I was determined to wear the diamond necklace and bracelets you gave me but of course I had to give that up—you know I had rather yield than have a scene.”

“‘There is where you ought to have held your own; you did not commence right.’”

“Well, I remembered what you told me. I did not speak to him on the way home and went at once to my own room. I did not go down to dinner. When the Count came in I could not shed tears, I was too indignant. Putting my handkerchief to my eyes, I sobbed, determined I would not speak. He came over, drew my hands away from my face, then turned and went out. I heard him giving orders to the French nurse. She came in and commenced to undress me. I ordered her out. As I could not speak the language, she hid not understand me but went on in her stolid way. To save a scene I had to submit. Then she lifted me in her arms and carried me into the bath, gave me a bath then put me to bed. I was crying, I assure you, by this time; I was so indignant! Just then in stepped Dr. Monoura. I was crying so I could not tell him I was not sick. He said:

“‘Do nod cry, dere ladi; you vill be better sone.’”

“He left such nasty medicine and the nurse followed his directions to the letter; and poured a spoonful down me every fifteen minutes. If I had not thrown it up I am sure I must have died. When the Count came in I was too sick to talk. He was so worried, and insisted on staying him-

self and brought in a cot, to be near, getting up every few minutes to see if I needed anything.

“The next morning I told him I was well, for fear they would repeat the dosing. The Count insisted on my staying in bed until after the doctor's visit. When he came he took out his case and insisted on my having a pill. I had to swallow it, and could have cried with vexation, but knew if I did I should have to swallow another portion of that horrid drug. I refrained and remained in bed all day. The doctor ordered nothing but broth and toast. Next morning I got right out of bed and had my breakfast in the dining room. The Count was so pleased he ordered the carriage and drove with me to Mme. Romans to have my dress tried. He is so very odd, so much like papa, that it was hours before it was arranged to suit him. I suppose it was all right, as I heard a Princess say at the reception, ‘Americans have such exquisite taste,’ while she looked me over. These foreigners are so odd. What must I do?

“I tried sobbing again when I wanted baby christened in St. James with cards. He at once sent for the doctor, who said sobbing was a sign of nerve disease. ‘Dere ladi uste take dis bill. She vill get vell soon but if she is so much vorse gif her von mor bill evra hour; nothing like zem

vor ze nerves, and you vas too yonke to let dis grow on you my dere ladi.' ”

“ Those horrid foreigners, how I dislike them. I told him that I was well. He left. I was so indignant I could scarcely talk yet I gave the Count a piece of my mind, I assure you. He laughed and said he was sure I was well when I was able to talk, so you see if I should dare sob he insists on sending for the doctor and imagines I am sick—he is so very odd. I usually let him have his own way.

“ When baby was christened the parlors were decorated with Lillies of the Valley and half-blown rose buds. Around the fount was twined their flag with our own. It being Sabbath eve a few select friends were invited to dinner. The duchess, who was baby's Godmother, said it was the most lovely service she had ever witnessed.

“ The Count has such queer notions. He says christenings and funerals ought to be quiet affairs. He was so very kind and considerate, though, when baby was born. I scarcely expressed a wish that was not gratified. We had a trained nurse from Edinburgh, and a child nurse, both in the house for months. The old family doctor, and an English speaking one from the Academy of Medicine, remained in the house constantly. He said he should have to be father, mother and husband as I was so far away from

home, therefore he must not overlook or neglect anything. He remained by me constantly himself. No one could have been more kind. The ladies all say he is a model husband and I suppose he is. Of course papa thinks he is too for he is so much like himself. I was very angry with him one day and said I should go straight home to you. He jumped up in great glee, and danced about the floor and said he was coming too—that it was just what he had been planning. Do you suppose I frightened him?”

“Remember, Evadne, you must not go too far. Never leave. We could not stand the mortification.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

ANNOUNCING ALVAN'S ENGAGEMENT.

MRS. ERLEIGH, I have not noticed Alvan in the parlors this evening," said Mrs. Aisley, and then she sighed sympathetically.

"Oh, I am not surprised. I have no doubt he is in the nursey with that everlasting baby. One has to bear these trials, dear Mrs. Aisley.

Some of the guests were resting, some promenading, when a bustle at the door attracted their attention and through the long parlors came Alvan and a beautiful young girl, each pushing with one hand a baby cab in which the winsom wee Count sat crowing, almost buried in a profusion of flowers.

Alvan held in his hand a large bouquet of flaming Peonies, while a bunch of Roses were pinned to his coat.

Thelma, for it was she, carried an armfull of Lilac and Roses with a wreath over head and shoulders, followed by Mr. and Mrs. Alwyn, who were also loaded down with flowers.

Mrs. Erleigh stepped to the front and said:

"Allow me to present to all. The future Mr. and Mrs. Alvan Erleigh, a Princess Royal," with a look at the Count as he stepped up and kissed the blushing bride elect.

Such a hum of congratulations followed; even Mrs Erleigh hugged and kissed, Thelma. She actually kissed that great silly boy, which caused him to blush as rosy as the bride. He had never been accustomed to his mother's kisses; and was not his bride elect a Princess?

Mr. Erleigh had wondered how to insure a welcome for the young stranger, and excused his conscience by saying, she was a Royal Princess any way, with her true, pure womanhood.

When Mrs. Aisley came up to offer her congratulations she whispered.

"Now this is too bad of you, Mrs. Erleigh, to keep me in the dark."

Mrs. Erleigh and Evadne, equal to any occasion said:

"Why, you know, Alvan and his father must have their secrets, and we have to humor them. But really the Princess must have cultivated Alvan's tastes. Did you ever see such a suitable and recherche floral display? You know I give myself credit for taste in the floral display, but I must say the Princess surpasses me."

Little did she dream that Thelma had said, "Alvan this is altogether too flaming," but when Mr. Erleigh had seen them half an hour before and pinned the roses on Alvan's coat saying:

"You can't please Mrs. Erleigh better than by carrying armloads of the brightest."

Mr. Alwyn laughed and said it was "spring-time and if flowers give any one pleasure let us have them in abundance. I am sure it is a small matter to throw aside our own ideas; let us make this an occasion of hearty good will, and let Alvan please his mother to the full."

When the van came from the hot house he selected the brightest, and for once Alvan was the source of unlimited pleasure to the mother who always thought him so very odd.

He and his father planned long how they might best present Thelma to the good graces of her future mother-in-law, as they had many misgivings. Finally they hit upon this plan, and it worked to perfection, aided by the little fib of Mr. Erleigh's and Alvan's and believed by Mrs. Erleigh.

Evadne told all her friends that Thelma came over with them—in fact she had, with Mr. and Mrs. Alwyn—on the same ship, but had remained with friends to rest after landing, and had only the day before the party arrived at the hotel where they were met by Mr. Erleigh and Alvan who formed this plan to announce the engagement, which was to be followed in June by the wedding and which was to be a very quiet affair at the Cathedral in the early morning.

Mrs. Erleigh would have liked a very elaborate affair, but Mr. Alwyn said, "No, it must be

quiet, to suit 'Thelma," who wished it so, with only immediate friends present.

Mrs. Erleigh stood a little in awe of Mr. and Mrs. Alwyn, as they were very quiet, dignified people.

"Of course a Princess would not do as ordinary people," she told Mrs. Aisley, who was all in a flutter and declared she "must surely have an invitation and see that dear boy married," because she had known him even from baby-hood.

She called at once on the Alwyns and 'Thelma when the wedding was announced, and came away very well pleased carrying an invitation card with the monogram, "T. A. E." Wasn't she one of the select four hundred?

She had not missed anything important for forty years, and felt she gave tone to every affair, even to the gossip, and was sure to hunt the latest in regard to all.

She enlightened 'Thelma about Editha, and said: "I had thought Alvan would have married here in his own country. She was a Miss Lavance, but it was a lucky escape as she has made a terrible wreck of the man she did marry— young Aberdeen—and they have separated, so I am told. I am very sorry for his mother."

'Thelma informed her she had heard Alvan speak of Miss Lavance and would love to meet her. Alvan and she had decided to visit her.

Mrs. Aisley left with this advice: "Be sure you are careful whom you meet, as they may be undesirable people and you are very young yet. Men are never very good judges whom one ought to know, and you will find that Alvan and his father are very odd in their selection of friends. Dear Mrs. Erleigh has been much tried with them in this particular, and as I am such a very old friend of the family, you must bear with me if I make suggestions occasionally, for I have such a deep interest in you, my dear. I may say I have almost raised Alvan, and there is nothing like beginning right for young married people."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE TRAGEDY ON THE RIVER.

ADELBERT in his kindness of heart, had listened to the pleadings of the mother and had gone to use his influence to induce Adair Aberdeen to settle down to a true, manly life, and if possible have him and his wife reconciled. Even as he thought of the mother he felt a qualm of pity for the young girl, who would have to live with this coarse, licentious, libertine. As for Adair reforming he had very serious doubts; could the leopard change his spots? Had Adair not spent the best part of his life with the fast set of young men? It was second nature with him!

Adelbert earnestly resolved that he would do his best to bring about a reconciliation.

He had gone to their shooting box and found they had determined to stay another month.

Finally he succeeded in getting Aberdeen to himself, and had a long, serious talk.

"I wonder, Abbyford, you would think of taking me to task about my affairs," with a silly laugh.

If they only concerned you individually I should not think of doing so. There are so many other lives to mar by your life and living, I beg

of you as a friend to give up these undesirable companions for your mother's sake, for your wife's sake, and your own sake."

"Well, don't preach, Adelbert. By the way, who sent you, the little Puritan?"

"It was your mother. For the love she bears you, Aberdeen, come home with me. Will you not come with me tonight? The others can leave at their leisure. Take your wife for a trip on the continent and when you return settle to some active business, or, care for the estate, which, you are aware, needs a business man at the head."

"Oh, I wouldn't give up this free and easy life for all your business matters. Just stay a week, Abbyford, and see the fun. You know nothing of life in your good, hum-drum way. Just stay with the boys, and see the sunny side."

"But what of your wife and mother? When a man takes a young girl from a loving home and companionship of friends he is in duty bound to sacrifice some of his own inclinations and pleasures for her sake; think of her, Aberdeen, alone since her mother's death."

"I don't fancy she worries about me. Isn't she safe enough at your place?"

"But, Aberdeen, it is your duty to know where she is, and care for her in her sorrow."

"Oh, bosh! none of your religious cant; I'll

have some fun, and then settle down, she can do the same."

"Aside from all cant, as you call it, I say Aberdeen you are pledged to her, as sacredly as she is to you, and to be untrue and neglect her in this manner in her time of need is a dastardly, cowardly act, not worthy of any man with a particle of principle.

"Now hear him preach! I tell you Abbyford, what's a man to do? Women are all such fools—they are all alike. By Jove! I intend to have all the fun I can. I like the gals, I do, by jove! and I never will be tied to one—couldn't if I tried. Your pious idea of honor, business and marriage, are all very fine, but don't suit this age. And so you have learned the tale of the gossiping servants, too, have you? You think the little Puritan pretty nice, eh?"

The indignant fire burned within Abbyford's soul. He could scarcely restrain himself from pouring fourth the indignant words that came to his tongue, but thinking of the mother, he controlled himself and said in a quiet, earnest tone: "Have you no care that this is a death blow to your young wife? Besides there is the other! Isabelle, too, has suffered."

"Oh, don't get sentimental. You are too good for this world! I won't listen to your

preaching any longer. I am not going home, by Jove, so that is ended."

Then he arose and said:

"Have a glass, then come and take a sail. We are going down the river a mile or two." Then taking several more glasses than was good for him, he arose and sauntered toward the others, who were lounging beside a tent. "Come along, Abbyford, don't be quite so pious; we'll have some fun."

"I beg of you, Aberdeen, come home with me, for the sake of our school boy days. Again, in the name of your mother I beg of you, come with me."

"I'll have no more of your preaching to me. That will do for today, I have listened to you for old friendship's sake, so come along."

Adelbert saw that it was useless to plead; that it would be vain to hope for reform in this man; so he said: "I will remain as your guest to-night and return home in the morning."

After their lunch they started off in two skiffs.

Adelbert watched from the banks, but declined all their invitations to join them.

He saw they fell to wrestling, and scuffling in their half intoxicated state, which was causing the boat to roll. He called, but they heeded not in their merry moods. The first boat had pulled down the stream.

Suddenly Abbyford noticed the boat in which Aberdeen was lurch violently, and then roll over, leaving the young men floundering in the water.

To leave his coat and boots on the bank, was but the work of a moment.

The others who were attracted by his cries, turned back. They were quite a distance away by this time. He plunged in, and struck out for Abbyford, knowing it was useless to try to save all. In a moment he had him by the collar and struck out for the shore. One had gone down, the other was clinging to the upturned boat. Adelbert struggled in the water with Aberdeen who, being so much under the influence of liquor, was unable to help himself, and was a dead weight.

At last the boat came up, rescuing the young man who held to the skiff and reaching Abbyford's side just as he and his burden were sinking from exhaustion. They dragged them into the boat. Abbyford was soon resuscitated, but not so with Aberdeen. They worked with him for hours before they saw the faintest gleam of life. When they perceived the first glimmer of life, one rode away for a doctor; the others worked over him.

In time two went out in a boat to look for the young man; scarcely hoping to find him. They were rewarded by seeing him alive clinging to an old log he had grasped as he rose. This removed a great horror from their minds.

Abbyford never left Adair. Nothing was left undone to make him as comfortable as possible.

When the doctor came he ordered him removed to the nearest village. They had him very carefully wrapped, and conveyed by slow stages to the best hotel in the place.

No mother could have been more tender of her child than was Abbyford of this man, who, for the sake of mother and wife, he had risked his own life to save.

In the morning he was muttering in delirium.

Going out Adelbert sent a telegram to Editha and his mother telling them of the accident and asking them to come at once.

CHAPTER XX.

ABERDEEN'S DEATH REVEALS A SECRET.

WHEN the telegram reached Editha she and Mrs. Abbyford started at once.

They were met by Adelbert who prepared them for the change.

Adair had seemed to arouse at intervals from his delirium, but the physicians would give no hope for favorable results.

As they entered the hotel the doctor was just leaving. He had been in consultation with the old family physician whom Adelbert had summoned on their arrival after securing one of the best of nurses.

The old physician met them at the door and said hurriedly:

"We will surely have good results with so many cheery faces. Mrs. Aberdeen, I think he will recognize you as he is awake and free from delirium at present. He lapses into these delirious spells as soon as the effect of the stimulants is gone. This is unusual. Perhaps this was the exciting cause for a run of fever, but as you are here we will surely pull him through. You are an excellent nurse, Mrs. Abbyford."

As they entered the sick room Editha could scarcely raise her eyes, her heart beat so violently.

She had not forgotten the last interview with Adair. The old loathing was still there! She went to the bedside. Every fiber in her body revolted against his touch, as he placed his hand on her's, yet she had thought on the way down that she was going to be so brave and had schooled her heart to meet him quietly! She had half made up her mind that she could live with him again if she saw any sign of reform in him.

Then the old spasms of pain would come with renewed force. She would then resolve to be kind, but he should never claim her as his wife.

She did not realize the hopelessness of the case, and had only spoken a few commonplace words, when he said:

“Ha! ha! Little Puritan; so you came down—stop! stop! don't you see the boat is tipping?”

Then his mind wandered back to his old camp. The doctor motioned for them to leave the room. He had hoped the sight of his wife would rouse him, but it did not and he shook his head, saying:

“There is no hope!”

Silent tears coursed down her pale face as she left the room think of all the sorrow this unhappy marriage had brought into her life. She sorrowed too, for the absent mother and resolved, with renewed tenderness, to be a daughter indeed and in truth.

Even if Adair and she could not be reconciled she would be kind to his mother.

Mrs. Abbyford sought to soothe the sick man, in her kind, motherly way, in his feverish wanderings, while her heart ached in silence for the absent mother.

Often he called out in a quick, nervous voice, "Della, Della," showing that all the best affections of his nature were centered in her.

Mrs. Abbyford tried in every way to keep the young wife from knowing this, never allowing her to remain in the sick room, feeling that she was not able to bear more.

Adelbert remained almost constantly by him. A mother could not have been more tender.

Adair lingered on in this state for several days. One morning, after a more than usual restless night, it was evident the end was drawing near.

Mrs. Abbyford and Editha had just entered the room where the doctor and Adelbert had spent the best part of the night.

Any one could see by the sunken features that the end was not far off.

Editha passed to the other side of the bed, taking the hand that was lying there.

He quickly turned his head.

"By jove, Della, so you're here at last. I knew you'd come."

He smiled.

Editha turned deadly pale and dropped the hand she held, then knelt and buried her face in the bed clothes; all the old pain tugging at her heart.

His head rolled away again.

With a few muttered words he tried to rise.

They placed a pillow at his back; he drew a few labored breaths, then the tired heart ceased to beat. He did not speak again. He had gone, with all the good or evil of a misspent life, to a higher tribunal.

The Abbyfords made all the arrangements to have his body taken to his home and placed in the family vault.

There were genuine tears of sorrow shed by Mrs. Abbyford for the long suffering, absent mother.

Editha knew his last thoughts were given to the only woman he was capable of loving, and knew that only the difference in birth had separated this man and woman. She pitied the cringing girl they passed on their return, who was weeping so wildly behind a gravestone, and felt that she would be a friend indeed to this desolate girl and her little child, who were more sinned against than sinning.

CHAPTER XXI.

MRS. ABERDEEN AND EDITHA.

WHEN Mrs. Aberdeen returned from the death bed of her relative all the old haughty pride was gone. She wept long on Adelbert's neck.

If those who had known her in the past and had given her credit for having no heart could have seen the mother in her sorrow they would surely have pitied her now. She cried over Editha as only a heart-broken mother can cry, and as Editha tried to comfort her, their hearts were knit together with a new tenderness, a lasting tie. She clung to Editha in almost childish despair; she seemed to have lost all care for the world and its opinion. It was painful to see this silent woman who never yielded to her own heart's cravings, clinging to the sad-faced girl.

Although Editha would rather have left the old house with all its painful memories, she felt while her mother-in-law lived, her first duty was to her.

Mrs. Abbyford and Adelbert came with Editha as soon as Mrs. Aberdeen arrived and remained a fortnight.

Editha felt she could never again enter the room where she had suffered the keenest sorrows

of her life. She stood there at last and, looking up, her eyes caught these restful words over her dresser:

Sleep sweetly in this quiet room,
Oh, thou, who ere thou act,
And let no mournful yesterday
Disturb thy quiet heart.
Nor let to-morrow cease thy rest,
With dreams of coming ill.
Thy Maker is thy changeless friend,
His love surrounds the still;
Forget thyself and all the world,
Put out each feverish light,
The stars are watching overhead,
Sleep sweetly, then, Good night! Good night!

She felt as though a benediction had fallen on her from above. She knelt and prayed for strength to do the right and for guidance that she might be helpful to others.

Next morning she awoke from her long, restful sleep and, dressing, hastened to Mrs. Aberdeen's room determined to put her good resolutions into practice.

She was well repaid by the loving welcome. The same motto was over her mother's dresser. She knew the loving spirit of Mrs. Abbyford had not forgotten the little things that count for so much in these turbulent lives of ours.

The following day was the Sabbath.

Mrs. Aberdeen proposed that they attend church, which they did and the fashionable pew

in the old cathedral never held two more sincere worshippers than the silent figures that knelt together at their Master's feet, in sorrow and humility. The God of the fatherless and the widow alone could comfort such sorrows as theirs.

CHAPTER XXII.

ALVAN'S AND THELMA'S FIRST BORN.

GREAT joy reigned in Alvan's home, when, one morning at dawn of day, the doctor told him a son was born to him.

You would scarce know which was the father, as you saw two fine-looking gentlemen arm-in-arm, walking toward the house.

Alvan, in his old boyish way, had gone to his father with his new joy; all the great manly fellow could say was:

"Father, come with me and see my son; mother, you will come, too."

They were at breakfast when Alvan entered.

His father rose, and throwing his arm around his shoulder, shook him cordially by the hand.

Mrs. Erleigh looked up: "I do hope the child will have none of these odd ways you and your father possess. It is on your father's side, remember. Of course you will have a public christening; certainly I shall not call at such an unseemly hour. I will call around with Lady Aisley, perhaps tomorrow, and arrange for the christening. I suppose we will never hear the end of these everlasting babies. I shall speak to Thelma, for you have no judgment where babies are concerned. I do hope you will act with the

dignity of a father, instead of that silly, boyish way. You really must have more dignity," and she sighed one of her resigned sighes.

As father and son passed out arm in arm she said, "they are so very, very odd."

The Abbyfords and Aberdeens were duly apprised of the new arrival, and all sent most hearty congratulations.

From the time of Alvan's marriage there had been the truest of friendship existing between Thelma and Editha.

One had only to know Thelma to love her.

Mrs. Erleigh, who was so hard to please in every one, could see very few faults in the Princess, but a title, in her eyes, like Charity in some others, covered a multitude of sins.

Thelma had the good sense to humor most of her whims.

Mr. Erleigh was happy in the love of his children and grand-children.

At last account, much to Mrs. Erleigh's dismay there were three little oddities.

Alvan dared hardly speak to his mother of this wee last girl.

She told him it was an imposition on a long-suffering, civilized community. She always waxed eloquent when talking to Alvan or his father of their misdeeds. When Lady Aisley called she spoke of the matter in a deeply grieved tone.

Thelma laughed and said:

“There was only one of me. I was so lonely; I wanted brothers and sisters. I think six a nice family.”

Mrs. Erleigh was perfectly scandalized.

“That comes, you see,” she confided to Lady Aisley, her bosom friend and confidant, “of her living with Alvan and imbibing so many of his odd notions. You see I counteracted a great many whims of his father.”

“Thelma will not go out, scarcely, but stays cooped up with Alvan and his everlasting babies. When you see them out driving they usually have a baby or two along. I always show my resentment, when meeting them thus, by driving off on another street. You would think the Count was Alvan’s brother, they are so much alike in their views, and you would be surprised how Evadne has changed. I could hardly believe my own eyes when I last visited her. It all comes of her living with the Count and away from my influence. They have two children but no one this side of the water shall ever know it from me, and I am sure you will respect my confidence, dear Lady Aisley as I must confide in some one. The Count is a most excellent husband, but very odd, you know.”

CHAPTER XXIII.

ADELBERT PROPOSES TO EDITHA.

ONE day Adelbert came over to Mrs. Aberdeen's and had a long talk with Editha.

"Why do you look at me so strangely, Mr. Abbyford?"

"Will you marry me, Editha?" was the only answer his lips would frame.

Editha hesitated, though she had been sure he would ask that question.

"Pardon me for being so abrupt. I was sure you knew I loved you; I always have felt, since I met you, that your soul read mine. Do you know what love is?"

"I think I know, but I can't tell you."

"Well, some one has said 'it is to lose all interest in your own life; it is to risk every hope you have on one person; it is to leave behind you all the calm theories of your life, to live only in a glad, feverish, wonderful dream, without law or order, only a sense of one existing in whom your life is lost,'" and Adelbert, who was always so quiet, steady and cheerful seemed to have lost control of himself, he spoke so passionately.

"Do you think all love is like that?"

"No, very few are capable of loving in that way. Most people live quiet lives, and perhaps

it is best. It is most assuredly the life without pain, for in the degree we are capable of loving in that degree are we capable of suffering."

She took his hand in both her own.

"I love you; does that answer suffice?"

"When did you first discover that you loved me?"

"When I first saw you, as you passed me in the park. If we never marry I shall always love you just the same. 'This love saved my reason.'" She paused a moment then continued: "I believe in affinities—you are mine"

The earnest gaze deepened and the sad look vanished into a smile, which brought out the dimples.

"Shall we speak to Mrs. Aberdeen now?" anxiously asked Adelbert.

"Not tonight; let me keep this love to myself one day."

Such peace had entered their lives!

Since Mrs. Aberdeen and Editha so thoroughly understood each other, they lived an entirely different life from the past—dropping out of society altogether.

On pleasant mornings you would find them driving, or reading together on the piazza, or earnestly conversing on the many themes they had in common.

This particular morning the senior Mrs. Aber-

deen was saying: "Such a life is very unsatisfactory. I realize it more and more. Only those who choose a true home life find real happiness with their chosen friend where the world may not intrude. Your selection of friends, my dear, is indeed a source of real comfort. What an ideal home Mr. Alvan Erleigh has. It is almost like taking a peep into Paradise since the new baby came."

Then, glancing up, she exclaimed with genuine feeling: "Here is Mrs. Abbyford and Adelbert! How happy I am to have you come," holding out her hand in cordial greeting as they came up the steps.

Editha came forward with such a rosy blush that any one could see there was a cause.

Two years had passed since Adair had died and Adelbert came to Mrs. Aberdeen this morning to ask for Editha in marriage.

It was no surprise for Mrs. Aberdeen had felt that this would be the end of the many, long, earnest conversations between them. She had taken Adelbert into her heart as her own child, and no son could have been more thoughtful of her comfort, more considerate of her wishes.

He laughingly knelt by her chair and she put her arms about him saying, "God bless you, my son."

The silent tears telling more than words could of the past and its pain.

“How can I give you my child; I cannot part with her?”

“You need not; I shall have two mothers and you two shall live with us.”

They were married quietly in the church one lovely June morning—their only guests being their two mothers, Alvan and Thelma and a few tried and true friends.

Mrs. Aberdeen decided to keep her house open and spend part of the time with them.

Not many days passed that they were not together. You would hardly have known which was the mother, so loving was the entire family.

One day Mrs. Aberdeen said:

“I have only one other request, Adelbert, and that is that one-half of all there is left of the estate shall be divided with Della so that she may educate her son. You will see to it?”

Then she said to Editha:

“Have you seen her? I did not like to pain you by asking.”

“Yes; I returned after the funeral and found her in bitterest grief, sitting by the grave. She was very sullen. I said, ‘I am sorry for you,’ and told her all; how I had married in haste and knew nothing of all this. She believed and forgave me. I asked if she would not like to put

the inscription on the monument, which seemed to assuage her grief somewhat. Surely that was her right. When I told her I believed, in the sight of God, she was more his wife than I, she caught my hand and kissed it. I left her there and have not seen her since."

Another year of unalloyed happiness passed away, then came a night of unrest. When morning dawned the doctor came out of the chamber where the great mystery of birth had been enacted, and said: "All is well; you have a son."

Nothing more was needed to complete this happy family circle. When they laid it in Mrs. Aberdeen's arms she laughed and cried in a breath.

At the quiet little christening he was named Aberdeen Abbyford with two god mothers.

No happier parents ever looked into the face of a first-born than Adelbert and Editha, who, with clasped hands, thanked God in unison for this gift of a little child.

If in ten years after you had asked Editha what she thought of marriage she would have answered:

"Happy marriage is the key-note to life. The two greatest evils are lack of union in character, from which comes trouble, sin, and crime and lack of interest parents take in the character and morals of the person to whom their children are to be united. Take those two evils out and there would

be few failures in marriage. Man's heart and conscience are controlled by love, so is the universe controlled.

Ian McClaren has well said, "There is ae heart. Life with all its mists and shadows has one great throbbing pulsing center. Put your finger on the world's pulse and you will know whether it is sare or jubilant."

CHAPTER XXIV.

MRS. ABERDEEN'S DEATH.

ONE day Mrs. Aberdeen had gone to look over her old boxes. When Editha went to her she found her sitting, holding lovingly in her hands a soft, white dress, somewhat yellow with age, yet draped with the most exquisite lace. As she held it up she said:

“It is my wedding dress! Will you see that I am buried in it when I am gone.”

Editha held it up and laughed at the dainty waist and flowing sleeves that had been the pride of the girl bride, now sitting there with her silver hair.

“The drapery will fold down for the waist. It is my wish that I shall wear it then.”

Editha threw her arms about her and kissed her beautiful hair.

“Well, my mother, we will make the dress lovely, and fasten it with roses; but if it please the dear Father I hope we shall not use it for that purpose for many years.

“My child, I have a strange notion that I would like you to arrange it now.”

“I will bring my needle,” said Editha, “and we will arrange it and you shall surprise them at dinner in this lovely dress.”

So together they folded the soft stuff about her neck and over her bosom.

When all was finished Edithia drew her before the long mirror to note the effect, which was lovely, as the drapery was caught at the waist with a bunch of white roses. The white hair rippling at the back in little curls was brushed away from the placid brow, leaving the calm, sweet face with its serene expression.

"How lovely!" said Editha. She called Adelbert to see the fair picture. He kissed her brow and said, "Mother, mine, you look like a bride, indeed."

With loving eyes full of unshed tears she sighed, "My children, you have been a great comfort. May God bless you both for this love. It has been more than food and raiment to me."

Adelbert took her hand, saying:

"I must take the bride our to dinner,"

The low windows were open, admitting the May breezes laden with the odor of spring flowers.

As they retired from the dining room to the wide piazza, Mrs. Aberdeen said:

"I am so glad we are alone tonight. I often wonder how I ever could have enjoyed so much company. Your theory is best.

"Mrs. Abbyford, the dearest spot on earth is home, surrounded by those we love."

“Adelbert, will you repeat to me the poem entitled *Tired*:

“Are you not feeling well?”

“Thanks, never better.”

He wheeled a low lounging chair near and seated her. Then, drawing his own chair near hers and taking her hand in his own he repeated in his restful voice the poem she asked for.

I am tired to-night and something
The wind may be, or the rain,
Or, the cry of the bird in the copse outside
Has brought back the past and its pain;
And I feel as I set here thinking
That the hand of a dead old June
Has reached to my loose heart strings,
And drawn them up in tune.
I am tired to-night, and I miss you
And long for you, LOVE, through tears.
It seems but to-day I saw you go—
You who have been gone for years—
And I seem to be newly lonely,
I, who am so much alone.
I am tired, and that old sorrow
Sweeps down the bed of my soul,
As a turbulent river might suddenly break
Away from a dam's control!
It brought a wreck in its bosom—
A wreck with a snow white sail,
And a hand on my heart thrums away,
But they only respond with a wail.

A long silence followed. A hush was on the very air—a peaceful silence over all. Then Mrs. Aberdeen said:

"I feel so rested, Adelbert."

He felt her fingers tighten over his, then relax; he heard a sigh and, looking, saw she was gone.

The tired heart was at rest.

They, in their surprise and sorrow, could not believe that she had so suddenly left them.

The doctor said it was heart disease but of what type only those who loved her knew.

"A peaceful ending," they said, "for the silent woman, the last of her race."

Her wish, that she might wear her bridal dress was granted.

They laid her by her loved ones, and felt that she had only gone to sleep and was dreaming of her bridal.

"How dressed in her robes of white
She stood by her gay young lover,
In the morning's rosy light.
Oh, the morning is as rosy as ever,
But the rose from the cheek has fled;
And the sunshine still is golden,
But it falls on a silvered head,
And the girlhood dreams once vanished
Comes back in her winter time
Till she feels her pulses throbbing
With the thrill of her early prime.
Though dim her eyes bright azure,
And dim her hair's young gold,
The love of her girlhood plighted
Has never grown dim nor old:
She sat in peace in the sunshine
'Till the day was almost done,

And then, at its close, an angel
Stole over the threshold stone.
He folded her hands together,
He touched her eyelids with balm,
And her last breath floated upward,
Like the close of a beautiful psalm.
Like a lovely bride she traversed
The unseen mystic road
That leads to the beautiful city
Whose builder and maker is God.
One draught from the living waters
Shall call back the maiden prime;
And eternal years shall measure
The love that out-lived time.
The shape she left behind her,
The wrinkles and silver hair
Made holy to us by the kisses
The angels printed there.
We hide her away 'neath the willows
When the day is low in the west,
Where never a sunbeam can find her,
Nor the wind disturb her rest.
And we'll suffer no tell-tale tombstone
With its age and date to rise
O'er our loved one who is old no longer,
In our Father's home in the skies

[THE END.]







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